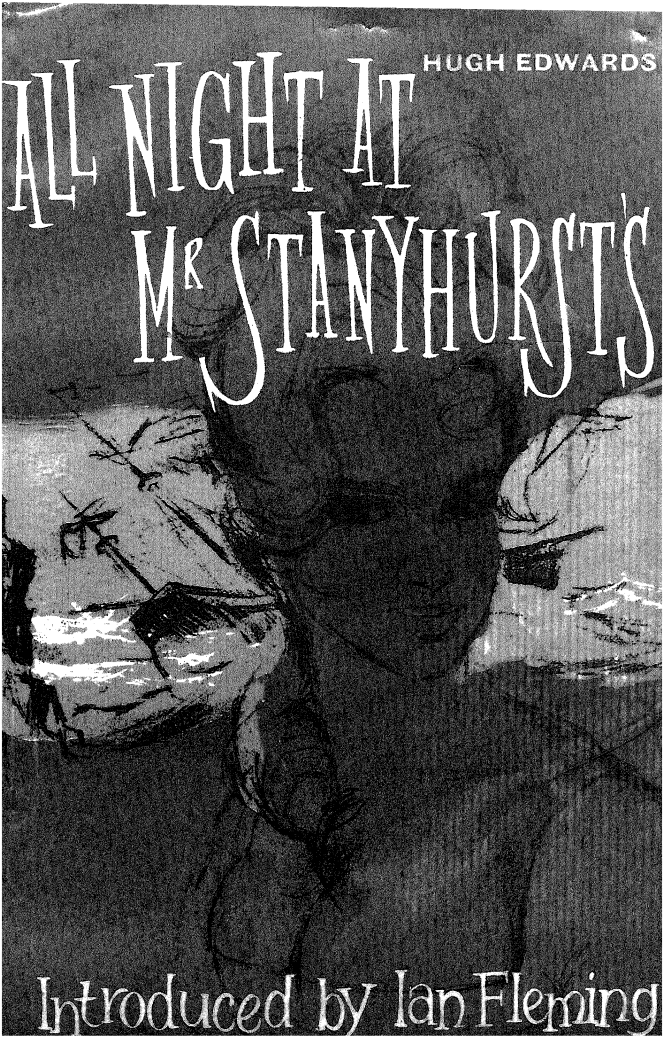

HUGH EDWARDS
ALL NIGHT AT
MR STANYHURST'S
Introduced by Ian Fleming

ALL NIGHT AT MR STANYHURST'S

Ian Fleming writes in his Introduction: 'Several times since Jonathan Cape became my own publisher I have urged them to reprint my choice among "lost" books, this short novel by the shadowy, unsung Hugh Edwards.' *All Night at Mr Stanyhurst's* was first published in 1933. At that time James Agate and L. A. G. Strong, among other leading critics, described it as 'a little masterpiece'. Three modest editions of the book were produced and sold before it went out of print nearly twenty years ago; but this is one of those rare instances in which the praise accorded to a book upon its first appearance was prophetic. The pure art of the story and charm of its narration have continued to delight readers, despite the scarcity of copies in circulation, throughout the intervening years.

It is a tale within a tale. London in 1783: Cluny Stanyhurst sups late with his friend, the French Abbé, and the pretty, insolent Lucy Suffren. Strangely, a sailor joins them, and a tale is told of secret cargo from the Indies, a wreck, adventures and misfortune in Africa. The story has meaning for all gathered in the room and they listen until dawn discovers the four, touched in their several fashions by what they have heard.

As evidence that the story has as great an appeal today as it had nearly thirty years ago, Commander King-Bull's radio adaption has been broadcast no less than four times in recent years.

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ALL NIGHT AT MR. STANYHURST'S

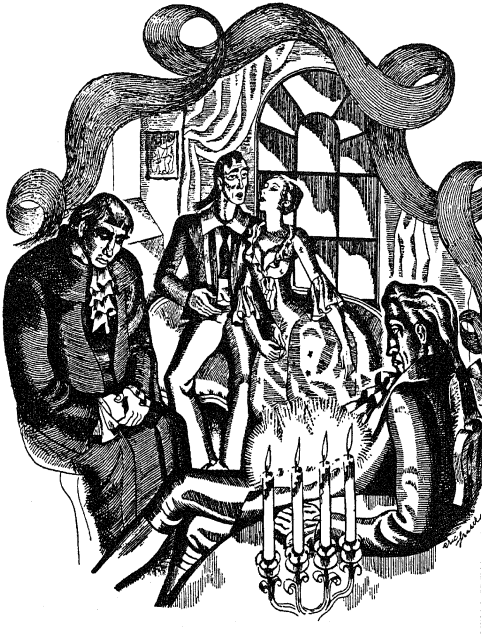
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ERIC FRASER

OCT 1966
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EAST BRANCH
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by the same author

SANGOREE
CRACK OF DOOM
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HUGH EDWARDS

ALL NIGHT AT MR. STANYHURST'S

with an Introduction by
IAN FLEMING

'*Under the Canopy*'
Coriolanus

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION © 1963 BY IAN FLEMING

PRINTED AND BOUND IN GREAT BRITAIN

Introduction

by

IAN FLEMING

An essential item in my 'Desert Island' library would be The Times Literary Supplement, dropped to me each Friday by a well-trained albatross. If forced to produce some reason for my affection for the journal, I would lamely say that I am nearly always interested by its front page article, by the letters, although there are not enough of them, and, being myself a book collector, by its back page of bibliophily. But, less lamely, I would praise the anonymity of its writers and reviewers which surely lies at the root of the unshackled verdicts that are, sometimes to the point of splendidly savage denunciation, to be found in the T.L.S.

Not long ago I was flying over the Nevada Desert on my way from Los Angeles to Chicago. It was one leg of a lunatic journey

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round the world in thirty days writing about its thrilling cities for the Sunday Times. My mail had caught up with me at Los Angeles and it included two issues of The Times Literary Supplement. In contrast with the mushy infant food of the American newspapers and magazines that had been my daily fare since arriving in America, I cannot describe the thrill of excitement with which I read a particularly devastating review of Miss Mary McCarthy's *Venice Observed*: I remember that the slashing broadside made me almost lightheaded with pleasure.

All this is to explain the sequence of events leading up to the republication of this forgotten little book which would not have occurred had I not, as a matter of course, read a leading article which appeared in The Times Literary Supplement of April 14th, 1961, and some of which, by permission, I now reprint.

OUT OF PRINT

It is cheering when a book of real quality seems to break through a barrier of indifference and bad luck. Ten years ago Mr. Christopher

Burney wrote a short work called *Solitary Confinement* which is one of the classics both of the last war and of that long process of imprisonment, brutality and sudden death in which the war itself was only one extra acute and well-publicized stage. The publisher went out of business, the book out of print. The public soon forgot it in favour of the simpler and more immediate, but also more trivial jottings of Anne Frank. Yesterday it was reissued in a new edition by another publisher (Macmillan, 173 pp., 13s. 6d.), and here it is once more ...

But how often are books raised from the dead in this way? Nowadays a work of fiction or autobiography or any other non-specialized, non-utilitarian type of literature has only a short time in which to sell or die — sometimes as little as three months. Less than ever, it seems, can publishers afford to keep unprofitable works in print, and in the restless search for new titles it is most uncommon for a publisher, as here, to turn to a more or less unsuccessful work of the past. Why the backward look should be so short-sighted it is difficult to say. ... Probably everyone has his own mental list of similarly neglected works which he is always pressing on his friends. What happens then? He lends his out-of-print copy; somehow it disappears; he cannot replace it; and within a few months he too has half forgotten what

the book was like.

And yet it may be that a book of this kind has merely been published before its time. To take an example from across the page, the English translation of Brecht's *Threepenny Novel* was being remaindered in 1939; today it is published by Penguins as a modern foreign classic. Similarly Mr. Beckett's *Murphy*, one of a remarkable batch of novels issued by Routledge in the 1930s, quickly dropped into the same limbo, where only word of mouth kept a few worn copies in circulation ...

Does this then mean that merit will win through in the end? It is not at all certain that it will, and for every sleeping beauty that is awakened by a publisher's kiss there are others that slumber on. Admittedly kisses of this sort are not encouraged by the fact that reprints are so seldom reviewed. But it is a pity if every generation in turn has to treat the more difficult and original works of the past as undiscovered territory. We stagnate if we do not absorb them into our literature and evaluate them; we waste time and energy repeating the same experiments only to arrive, twenty or thirty years too late, at much the same point ...

* * *

Several times since Jonathan Cape became my own publishers I have urged them to reprint my choice among 'lost' books, this short novel by the shadowy, unsung Hugh Edwards, and now, fortified by The Times Literary Supplement, I returned to the attack. The reply was unexpected. Yes, they would do it — if I would write an introduction. I will not discuss here my mixed reactions to this suggestion, but one thing was clear — the rebirth of this book now lay, rightly or wrongly, with me. I had only to say 'Fly again, little bird', and it would fly. So, of course, I accepted and asked Capes for any material they had about the book and the author. The result was extremely meagre, but among the yellowing scraps, mostly ecstatic reviews, there was one treasure — an introduction by James Agate to the author's next book *Helen between Cupids*. I cannot remember much of this or any other of Hugh Edwards's books, but what Agate has to say about *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's* is so apt to the theme of what I now write that, risking the criticism that all my words are other people's, I must

repeat here some of what Mr. Agate had to say twenty-five years ago.

> I am not going to pretend that Mr. Hugh Edwards's *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's* is the one good story which the readers of today have missed; I can think of half a dozen in the last three or four years over which public apathy began to silt even on the morning of publication. But I also know that on the day when Mr. Stanyhurst appeared we, meaning the Daily Express and me, came out pretty strong. We said: 'The word "masterpiece" is over-used, and one is wise to be shy of it. But I will maintain that here is probably a little masterpiece and certainly a tour de force. So far as my reading goes, it is the best long story or short novel since Conrad.'
>
> I did more than review Mr. Edwards's book; I even went to the length of buying a copy or two and sending them to friends. Taking advantage of the fact that I was in communication about something else, I sent a copy to Mr. Max Beerbohm, although I have never set eyes on him. I wrote: 'It has been on my mind for some time that I have never answered your last critical and appreciative letter. To repair this I have sent you a novel published this week which has delighted me greatly. I do not know anybody except you who could have written it,

and very few other people who are entitled to read it. I know nothing of the author except that he writes and writes and writes. There is no arrière pensée behind this gift except the desire to while away one of your evenings.' Max — who has no superior in the art of living, and this includes refraining from unnecessary correspondence — made no allusion to the book for another eighteen months, when, taking advantage of the fact that he was in communication with me about something else, he said he had read it twice, on each occasion with the liveliest pleasure. And surely if agreement is reached by two doctors of letters as dissimilar as the exquisite Max and the burly me, it can matter little who differs? But that's the whole point! I shouldn't mind if people differed. What I do mind is that they just don't take any notice.

The rest of the introduction to 'Helen' need not concern us. Suffice it to say that, despite rave reviews when *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's* was first published in 1933, and despite Mr. Agate's powerful reminder in 1935, it took more than four years for the modest edition of fifteen hundred to be sold. The author earned £31. 3s. and the

publisher barely covered his costs, having rashly spent over £50 on advertising.

In 1937 the book was reset and republished in the 'New Library' edition at 2s. 6d. (Edwards was in good company here. 'The New Library' included Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, and O'Flaherty's *The Informer*) and this edition of a further three thousand sold out in seven years, earning £43. 17s. 9d. for the author. Edwards's total reward for his 'little masterpiece' thus amounted to just under £7 a year over eleven years, to which was later to be added a modest windfall of ten guineas when the little book was published in a Services paperback edition by Guild Books in 1943...

* * *

Hugh Edwards died in 1952 at the age of 74. At first I could find out nothing about him except, from his elderly sister, the widow of an Admiral, the following bare bones. He was born in Gibraltar in 1878 of a Naval family, was educated privately and then at Sandhurst whence he joined the West

India Regiment and saw service mostly in the West Indies and West Africa. After twelve years in the army, he was invalided out and retired to his sister's cottage in East Prawle in Devon. A forlorn attempt to render service in the First World War resulted only in a brief spell as an officer of the garrison of Cork. His health proved quite unequal to military duty and he returned to seclusion.

Encouraged by the success of former contributions to his regimental magazine (for which, incidentally, he had designed the cover) he had set about writing professionally, but it was some twenty years before Capes accepted his first novel, *Sangoree*. This was followed by the present book, then by *Crack of Doom* (Jonathan Cape, 1934), *Helen between Cupids* (Jonathan Cape, 1935), and *Macaroni* (Geoffrey Bles, 1938). After that, silence! Hobbies: painting, polo, bridge and chess.

With these scraps of biography my researches had come to a full stop when, by chance, Commander and Mrs. E. J. King-

Bull heard of my interest in Edwards and swam into my ken.

Commander E. J. King-Bull (who is, incidentally, a descendant of the character said to be the original 'John Bull' of old England) is a well-known writer and producer for the B.B.C. and has, with his wife, close connections with members of the Edwards family, notably the Leonards who, as children, sat at the feet of Hugh Edwards and listened to their uncle's stories.

King-Bull was a great admirer of Edwards and, enjoying *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's* as much as I do, turned the book into a radio play and persuaded the B.B.C. to allow him to produce it in the Third Programme in 1950. The play was conceived as a tribute not only to the memory of Hugh Edwards but also to the memory of King-Bull's friend, the late Captain R. F. Leonard, D.S.C., R.N., from whom King-Bull had heard so much about Edwards. The play was a tremendous success, and was broadcast four times.

From what King-Bull told me it is clear

that a whole book could be written about Hugh Edwards, but I have insufficient space here to do more than mortar together a few of the loose stones I have already put on display.

Having been at Sandhurst myself, and being thus able to imagine the regimental snobbery that must have permeated the place around about 1900, I was surprised that Edwards had joined the West India Regiment. But apparently about that time his parents lost most of their money and he had to accept a commission in an unfashionable regiment to protect his shallow purse. He was rewarded by seeing the West Indies in their last rip-roaring days, and his memories of the barbaric splendour — a compound of blood, champagne and pretty quadroons — were to inspire all he wrote, culminating in the Kingston earthquake which features in his *Crack of Doom.* To Hugh Edwards the cataclysm may well have seemed to presage the vanishing of the only era in which he was to live any other than a kind of ghostly existence.

It was the custom in those days for one

battalion of the regiment to alternate between the Caribbean and Sierra Leone, and it was while exploring the hinterland of Sierra Leone that Edwards contracted blackwater fever, as a result of which he was invalided out of the army with a meagre pension.

With this, and with his sister to keep house, he retired to the tiny fisherman's cottage in East Prawle in which he lived the life of an eighteenth-century recluse, confining himself to one attic in which there was nothing but a large bed and hundreds of books. It was at about this time that he inherited from a relative, who had been in his day a West Indian planter, a stack of old documents and diaries of the eighteenth century in which Edwards immersed himself to that extent of total rapport that emerges almost supernaturally in the story from which I am holding you.

It is interesting, perhaps, that he should have been stationed for a while at Cork, that fair Atlantic seaport which, in the heyday of eighteenth-century trade, had had long associations with the West Indies, and which forms part of the back-cloth to more than

one of the novels.

At Prawle he lived the remote life of his imagination for many years, reading, writing and composing albums of illustrated nonsense rhymes for the numerous nephews and nieces and cousins who came there for the holidays. One catches a glimpse of the man from the fact that, as I am told, he began the draft of an autobiography, never to see the light of day, by addressing in affectionate gallantry a bevy of his charming nieces and their friends.

In his Edwardian youth he had been, by all accounts, a young blade of tremendous dash and virility and with a zest for all the wine of life, but one of the terrible side-effects of blackwater fever is that it rids a man of all appetite for these things, and there is no doubt that the romantic sexuality and the background of high life to *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's* are sentimental memories of the young rake-hell he had once been.

Perhaps also the poignancies of this story, which so pierce the heart, are in part tears shed for his brief youth. But these and other secrets of this strange and in some curious

sense ghostly figure have gone to his grave with him and will, I fancy, never be disturbed.

I, at any rate, have come to the end of my brief researches into the story of the man who wrote *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's*, and it is now time for him to speak in his own strange and beautiful words.

ALL NIGHT AT MR. STANYHURST'S





CLUNY STANYHURST, at Quennell's, became conscious that a group of his fellow members had begun to discuss a piece of news of some moment. But he was not curious. Whatever seemed of importance to these swilling, wager-laying, Faro-crazy rattlepates, could be of no concern to himself. And with the aloof demeanour that even in his cups he never lost, he went, a half-full glass of sherry in the hand, into the handsome bow-window, to look upon the pedestrians of the London pavements, and the curricles smartly rattling over the cobbles. Any pretty little girls about this afternoon?

The man carried under the left arm a plain tricorne hat. This, both indoors and out, was a custom of the period. But, in his case, the habit allowed the fact that one arm had been a trifle shortened by disease to go unremarked. Cluny Stanyhurst had been unlucky enough, in two of his three duels, to take bullets in the left shoulder and forearm.

The hackney coach that had brought this man to the Club was still waiting by the portico. He saw a post-boy check a cob at the entrance, and the hall-porter step outside to receive copies of a news-sheet — the *London Courier*. The arrival of journals, Cluny Stanyhurst thought with a measure of disdain, might yet further excite the tedious fools behind him. And then he caught the word 'Suffren', and he frowned. Where had he heard that name before?

A handsome girl with a face charmingly young, but too heavily painted, made a provoking movement of the lithe body, shook the curls, and glanced sideways and up, from under a wide hat, towards the rich window. A fat gentlewoman in taffeta bonnet, panniered overskirt, and farthingale, followed by an infant blackamoor in a preposterous turban, elevated a disapproving nose. Stanyhurst lifted that corner of the lip marked by a brown mole, and the teeth gleamed in a malevolent smile. And then again he fell into thought.

Whenever the man was either meditative or serious the fine eyes had an upward look,

and thin lines of white showed beneath the blue. The godless idea that had taken him when he met the glance of the girl, and saw the impudent tongue exhibited and withdrawn, was very soon dismissed. A little baggage whom it would be a pleasure to whip, he had thought for the moment, and then once more become preoccupied. The word 'Suffren' had again intruded and was still a puzzle.

All at once the voice of Admiral Jerdan, husky and arrogant, was heaved in navy impatience above the talk. The old officer, crippled by the gout that he pretended to be wounds received in battle, supported himself on a gold-headed cane. His face, although he was now retired from the sea, retained a dusky crimson due as much to port and West India rum as to service under winds and suns. Even in the Club the eyes seemed to hold the expression of a man staring over wide seas. He was one of the few members present wearing a sword. And, as usual, he held a glass. The sailor's stockings, Stanyhurst noticed with disgust, were wrinkled. A sloven, old Jerdan.

'Suffren?' the Admiral repeated with a kind of brutal emphasis; 'yes, that's how the feller's called in the gazettes. Saint Tropez is the name — André Saint Tropez. About the best seaman the *Jeans Crapeaux* ever had, in my opinion. God help the poor devil if he fails. That Austrian girl of King Lewis's don't allow no defeat. The little bitch'll have him stranded, sure as torments. And it's in the log he'll be diddled now, no mistake. He's found his match, damme, in Eddie Hughes.'

Someone asked Admiral Jerdan if he knew Sir Edward.

'Why, yes,' the officer replied; 'I was shipmates alongside Eddie at Cartagena and Quebec. I don't bear the swab no malice. All the same, tear my damned liver, it's me and not him should have been Commander-in-Chief on the East India station. Eddie a Knight of the Bath, and myself on the beach, God save King George and old England! Hughes never had no better claims than me.'

'The battles in the Bengal Sea have been indecisive, according to the *London Post*,' a member observed. 'It's my theory those

actions have ended in favour of Admiral Suffren.'

'And who in hell wants to know your theory?' the other exploded. He pulled savagely at a bell-rope. 'Ain't the *Courier* fetched the Club yet?' he shouted. The officer might have been on the quarter deck.

'Crude old bore,' Stanyhurst thought.

A waiter brought in copies of the *Courier;* and the man at the window heard the fresh sheets crackle in a silence that suddenly was broken by shouts and eager talk. Cluny Stanyhurst, well posted in East India affairs — he was, out of respect for the memory of his dead father, always courteously received in India House — knew and was unmoved by the information agitating the members. The manœuvres of British and French in the East were over. Peace — the Treaty of Versailles — would soon be signed between the two countries. And, moreover, England had at last come to terms with her American colonies. Laughter and shouts arose; and boisterous slappings of shoulders, gay oaths, and loud orders for champagne, irritated the

man standing solitary. With the air of one oblivious of what had caused the ovation, he drained his glass and departed. Mr. Stanyhurst was both respected and regarded with faint hostility in the Club.

The fine afternoon had brought an air of brisk movement into the commerce of the streets. People and things looked somehow jaunty. But the hackney coachman, turning an old mottled countenance upon the fare, was sullen.

'I been sitting 'ere nigh two hour, mister,' he complained in a voice rusted by gin and weathers. 'I hears Paul strike once, and then again. This box ain't no bloody easy chair. If you'd ha' told me you was going to stay, I'd ha' got down and gone for a dram. The rheumatics has took me somethink cruel. It's a sin, the way I've been treated.'

Stanyhurst said in his frozen and indolent voice: 'Do you know any one called Suffren?'

'Let's see' — the driver thrust up the brim of the hat and scratched the hair — 'why, yes, that was the name of the lady in the pretty cottage. Piccadilly was the place. I

drives old Lord Cluny there time after time. And I reckon I knows what for, too.' The man leered and winked. 'This information worth a pot o' the stuff, mister?' he added.

The club porter lowered the steps, and Stanyhurst got into the coach. Of course — of course! Lucy's surname was Suffren. He smiled, not too benignly, at an idea of the girl's impatience with the name Lucy — which he thought pretty — and could not remember how he had discovered she had been so christened. Blanchefleur, old Cluny had always called her, and that was the name she had grown to prefer. But not Stanyhurst. It was heaven to wring the young lips with kisses while little madam was annoyed.

He remembered his kinsman, Lucy's former protector, with malice, and was taken with sharp gratification. It had been a piece of vindictive enjoyment to take the chick away from the old devil, and to pretend not to know what had become of her. Stanyhurst caught a vision of Lucy slim and pliant – she was then fourteen — sitting that mettlesome horse of hers in the Park. A groom had been

always in attendance, and heavily bribed to ignore the assignations. How courteous Cluny Stanyhurst had always been, riding side by side with the slender young creature, and what hideous cravings had possessed him! In the saddle Lucy had a fearless, debonair, boyish look that caused the young beaux, trotting or cantering on the sward, walking their mounts on the gravel, to look at and covet the smart little horsewoman. Stanyhurst had felt both a touch of pride and a stab of cruel desire every time he had looked sideways upon the girl, the enrapturing young face below the hat with the nodding long feather. A child, by God! Yes, he had been smiling and polite — and torn with longing — during the stolen rides.

And he had envied and hated old Lord Cluny whose plaything Lucy then was. The girl's disappearance had unmistakably shaken my lord to the heart; but it was highly probable that brandy and debauchery would, in any case, soon have brought the ancient rascal to the grave. What a life! There the old sinner had sat, in his town window, with a running footman at hand to be sent after any

girl who should give him a look of happy impertinence. It was known he liked to catch 'em young. The old man had had impeccable manners, of course, whatever wickedness the suavity disguised, and courtesy always attracted buds of girls and froward young women. Lucy had shed tears, damn the little witch!

Cluny Stanyhurst jerked the check-string and descended from halted coach to pavement. He had suddenly decided to walk the rest of the way. It was good in late afternoon to stroll the London ways. The many-paned concave windows of the shops were bright with expensive vanities; and some, even thus early, beginning to glimmer with lights. An old lady, in astonishing wig and satin bonnet, lifted a lorgnette and arrogantly stared from the gilded and purple sedan that was now so unusual an object of town. Wheels and hoofs reverberated in the cobbled street; elegant Londoners went by with vacant eyes; and grace and the pride of wealth were in acute contrast with poverty shuffling in the gutter. An emaciated beggar offered Stanyhurst a broadsheet containing

the alleged confession of a murderer, and then, looking into the cold face, seemed disconcerted, spat a coarse venom, and moved away.

'Give us a bit of blunt over and above, please, mister,' the coachman said in a sort of snarling whine; 'it's bitter hard, this life, for a poor old codger with the agues. Out in the rain all last night I was, and nary a blasted fare the whole time.'

Stanyhurst extended a generous tip; and so went walking, a fashionable, lean, pale man of thirty-six, in laced, carelessly-tied cravat, tailed coat open upon a quietly flowered long vest, a fall of ruffles at the cuffs, breeches buttoned at the knee, pale silk stockings and buckled shoes. The wasted left shoulder was padded, the hat tucked under the withered arm, and none of the light and modish women eyeing the handsome figure could have guessed the man was slightly deformed. A knowledge that Stanyhurst had been damaged by wounds received in the field of honour would undoubtedly have afforded them nothing but sinful delight. Even the icy hauteur was a fascination. And the

often bitter humour. Women, it is to be allowed, were charmed by one who looked so distant and well bred.

But on his father's side the man was of plebeian stock. It was only through his dead mother that Stanyhurst could claim relationship with a noble house. She had, to be truthful, been what may be called forced into marriage with the wealthy taciturn official of the East India Company. Her son still remembered with mingled admiration and hate the stylish cold beauty, so many years younger than the husband she despised. There had been some bitter scenes between wife and husband; but, of course, the latter had always been able to appease his temper with the opium that in the end had no doubt helped to destroy him, just as the drug, they said, had broken the will of Lord Clive.

His father's death had left Stanyhurst in possession of an extensive Devonshire estate, a considerable income, and a London mansion. But, in town, he favoured a more discreet dwelling.

This evening he approached a house in Montagu Square by way of a small walled garden, bisected by a tessellated path, at the back. A trembling copper beech, gay flowers, and the footway of coloured tiles, made this entrance more agreeable than the other, he always thought.

Besides, there was a chance of surprising in an obscure passage Lucy's pert little French maid. The girl was distinctly fetching, with that shy smile of hers combined with a sly look sideways from under the eyelashes. Stanyhurst, going along the path, disturbed a thrush breaking the shell of a snail on the mosaic, and was aware of a swooning, faint scent of stocks. To break a girl among fragrance and colour! He quietly unlatched a green-painted, brass-hinged door, and went, stepping carefully, inside. But he saw at once and with chagrin there was no hope of kissing the lady's-maid. For as he passed the half-open kitchen-door, this was the scene to be glimpsed:

The negro footman, all the smart livery unbuttoned, was covetously watching the mob-capped girl, where she sat on the table

with shapely knees and legs visible in the arch of a belled skirt. The maid tossed the head, laughed, gave a kick that showed her bare thighs, and sent a slipper flying to the ceiling. The cook, a vast female with the breasts almost bursting from the bodice, was tilting a squat black bottle to protruding lips. A little smutty urchin of a chimney-sweep, crouched in a corner, was sucking an orange. A page-boy, near by, was asleep. Life below stairs, Stanyhurst told himself. Damme, he was burning for an opportunity to embrace the maid. The man twisted the lip in a smile of relish and spite. The creature's legs were attractive, and the brat knew it, evidently; for there she was, kicking and laughing for the benefit of negro Joel. Cupidity, Stanyhurst saw, had heated the footman's tawny eyes and brought the lips apart.

He would find, perhaps, an early excuse to give black Joel a thrashing. Old Stanyhurst, who had bought the slave in Liverpool of a Guinea merchant out of Bonny, had often, while training him to wait at table, flogged the fellow. Joel had then been a boy, but it

might be expedient to continue the discipline, with the hint that a pretty French girl was not for the likes of a negro. A slow surge of yearning, dissolute and gleeful, seemed to climb within Stanyhurst's body, and he drew the breath with appetite and pleasure. He was thinking both of the girl in the kitchen, and of his enslaving little mistress.

Upstairs, upon a landing, Cluny Stanyhurst rapped on a tall, cream-coloured door, the panels of which were picked out in gilt. A young clear voice was raised from within. 'Is that Mr. Stanyhurst?' — the tone was high and confident. The man quickly opened the door and entered a pretty bedroom.

Lucy, dressed only in a charming shift and cherry silk stockings, was lying on a narrow couch. Long, minutely-flowered curtains were drawn across the many little panes of a high window, and two tapers, burning in copper candlesticks, brought a soft glow upon gold, silver and enamelled porcelain trinkets on a toilet-table, and were reflected in an oblong mirror surrounded with a scroll of carven small blossoms. The room was at

once dainty and luxurious. A low bed, built to rest a single person, was piled with scalloped pillows above a milky counterpane studded with tiny roses and green leaves. A leopard-skin lay by the bed. An Indian carpet was on the smooth white-painted floor.

Coming into Lucy's bedroom, Stanyhurst noticed nothing but the girl. Looking upon the delicious young figure, he snatched the breath in a sort of shudder, and his look was ugly and elated. When the crushing arm had been withdrawn, and her lips were free of the pitiless mouth, the girl said, 'You beast!' and sat up. She looked a sulky and offended child; bright colour flushed the cheeks, and, with a grimace of pain, the girl thrust out a bruised underlip and felt it with the tip of the tongue. A sleepy canary-bird chirped once in a little hanging cage.

'Supper to-night, sweetheart, and a guest,' Stanyhurst told the girl.

Lucy, patting and smoothing rumpled curls, and drawing pretty eyebrows together, said angrily: 'Me and you were going to the play, and coming home to a tray

supper. It's a wicked shame, the way you arrange for one thing and then go and do another. We've not been to Covent Garden these many weeks, and the box in Drury's only used by that little French slut o' mine. You told Mr. Sheridan you were taking me to the *Trip to Scarborough*, for I heard you.' Lucy was beautiful and reckless as usual, and sweetly mad. 'You half kills a girl,' she resumed in impatience and temper, 'and then coolly goes and tells her you're not taking her abroad.' The charming young face was suddenly bright and expectant. 'Is it one of the Guards' officers?' she asked.

'You'll be annoyed to hear it's a priest,' the man said.

'Gracious God!' — the girl's lovely eyes were dilated in a kind of fear. And then, surprisingly, she smiled. 'You're not arranging to marry me, are you?' she inquired with glee.

He did not trouble to answer. 'Sherry, turtle, asparagus, a cold bird and candies; claret and champagne. All very simple — no ceremony. Cook can manage, I suppose?'

'Unless she's foxed,' Lucy said. She drooped the lips, made the eyes stupid, and

helplessly wagged the head in drunken pantomime, while she said thickly : 'Tip-tip-tippled — the roast burnt, and the soup boiled over, and the cat scalded, and the kitchen afire.' The girl made vague weak gestures with delightful, delicate hands. Then, thrusting a little bare breast back under the chemise, she became agile. Slipping a beautiful China smock over the curls and pretty shift, and pushing the toes into frail slippers, Lucy, after a glance at a diminutive French clock, quickly went and pulled a silken bell-cord.

'You'll likely have to wait until seven or eight, Cluny,' she told him, 'but la, that don't matter, I daresay.' She naughtily, deliciously laughed. 'There'll be time for you to confess, if that's what you're after. Blessed Jesus, even a cassock'd be shocked at what you've got to tell. There's not many's indulged in such depravities as you, my man. The holy person'll know I've been kissed, that's certain. This swollen lip's not going to be anything like natural yet awhile. A savage, that's what you are, Cluny. When poor little Blanchefleur's seventeen you'll

likely kick her into the street and get another child. Mangle 'em, thrust 'em away, and find a fresh one. Yes, tell the priest, Cluny. Would you like me to dress simple, or to put on the flounced brocades?'

'Please yourself,' he said. 'And don't, for God's sake, tell me I'm going to forget you, you bad little girl. You shall have an allowance for life, whatever happens. Come here,' he said sternly. When the girl flinched and moaned, he smiled. 'Now compose yourself,' he told her: 'here's your maid.'

Mademoiselle, after scratching in the French manner upon the door, came modestly in, and stood with downcast eyes, and hands demurely pressed palm to palm. While she remained thus, in the posture of one receiving instructions, her eyes, gleaming under lowered lashes, slid towards her master. Cluny Stanyhurst saw the attitude and questing glance, and was taken with a pang of lust. The little trull! He went through an inner door to his own room, and, the French maid gone, began to talk to Lucy while he made an evening toilet. The door between the two rooms had been left wide,

and, if he liked, he could see the girl where she moved whistling and stripped about the floor.

'Wasn't your mother's name Suffren?' he inquired.

Lucy came to the door, and stretched her white young arms upwards to grasp the lintel, and was lovely and shameless. 'Now where on earth did you learn that?' she said mocking. 'Did my old lord tell you? Poor dear unhappy *maman*. She cried like rain, and so did I, when she must leave town for the Spas. Tunbridge and then Bath. But it wasn't because she was awful ill, and going to die. You know very well why it was, Mr. Kidnapper. She weeps because of little girlie. Me, I must leave school and try to please someone who'd been very kind to her. And afterwards it was you, you wicked one. It's monstrous distressing, me telling you this, Cluny, and you've heard it all before, and know it by heart. Will you promise me something?'

'Anything in this world or the next, you adorable nymph.'

'You mustn't talk about the place to

which you're bound. Well then, I want you to call me Blanchefleur while we're at table. I'm white and tender same's a sweet lily, aren't I? — look!' She saw his expression change, and quickly dropped the arms, slammed the door, and left him alone. Stanyhurst heard her voice almost at once speaking to the maid, while the latter was dressing her. 'Lace me a little closer to-night, Julie,' were the words that provoked a momentary thrill. Julie! A pretty name. The man poured hot water from a can of hammered brass and began the toilet. He had done without the service of a valet ever since shoulder and arm had been mutilated. Stanyhurst hated to have the affliction known. The laced stock, ruffled shirt, coat, waistcoat, stockings and shoes were disposed ready to hand, and in spite of the slight deformity, the man dressed swiftly, carefully, and with ease. Then, folding the arms, he contemplated the appearance he made in the mirror.

His hair, combed but loose, fell about the cheeks. Stanyhurst liked the mole at the corner of the mouth. It put him in mind of the old-fashioned vanity-patches, and the

man was well aware of the touch of strangeness and allure the blemish imparted. The eyes were proud and beautiful. Letting the left arm fall, Stanyhurst looked at the limb with disfavour.

'In this crimson coat I might be some cursed swaddy crippled in the wars,' he thought. 'Disgusting! Spare a copper, kind gentleman, for a poor old redcoat broke at Saratoga. Two men dead, and one living and spoiled. Affairs of honour! Stupid!'

He saw himself as he had fled abroad, and remembered the pretty wife of one of his dead rivals. She had consoled him in exile, the hussy. Money, apparently, condoned all. When the wound was mended, and the legal case against him allowed to vanish, he had come back. And here he was, with a maddening little girl in one house, and himself sometimes practising formal civilities in another. The servants of John Company, brandy-swilling liverish gentlemen and boorish youngsters, out of duty in the East, or men of town and their fashionable girls, might be received here — but only occasionally, and with circumspection, the mem-

bers of the polite world. There was the mansion in Grosvenor Square for the latter. Lucy might behave with commendable discretion, or she might not. There were unpredictable wanton moods of laughter and recklessness, bewitching sometimes, and sometimes purposely, brazenly naughty. It was best to entertain the straight-laced elsewhere. A priest, he thought with a subtle smile, did not matter so much. It might be amusing to see how Lucy reacted to the presence of the Church, the Church to beautiful girlhood. Besides, the Abbé was, of course, French. A trifle lax in morals, that attractive land.

Stanyhurst went into the next room to get either Lucy or her maid to tie back his hair. How nice if, like her mistress, he could find fault with Julie, and smack the staid little face. That artificial, pretty modesty of the wench was, damn him, provocative. Observe her now where she bends to adjust the pads at her young mistress's slender hips. The position, barring the furbelows, is faultless for a spanking. He crookedly smiled. And the French girl, lifting big eyes in assumed timi-

dity, was aware, he knew, of the idea that had touched him. But the maid, of necessity, pretended to believe her master's amusement was caused by the pleasure he felt in surprising the half-dressed little beauty.

'*Mon dieu, monsieur, madame est ravissante ce soir*,' she said with quick deference.

Stanyhurst, the hair-bow having been tied by Lucy, looked significantly into Julie's eyes as he crossed the floor to go downstairs. The memory of Lucy, slim, half-naked, and humming an air of the theatre, and the thought of Julie deliberately sticking out her behind, accompanied him as he went. Then he prepared himself to be sedate and polite, quietly affable and composed, in the reception of a guest.

In a tranquil, pleasingly furnished anteroom, on one wall of which was displayed a coat of Rohilla chain-mail, Cluny Stanyhurst was lifting a glass of sherry, when the black footman appeared in the doorway. 'Mistah him Reverence Jacko, if you please, sah,' the negro announced, and stood in a rigid pos-

ture, the great eyes rolled respectfully up towards the ceiling, while a man in ecclesiastical dress, sombre against a livery a little resplendent, came into the room.

'Ah, Monsieur l'Abbé,' Stanyhurst said with a bow, 'this is a great pleasure. Pray be seated, and let me have your verdict in respect of this sherry of mine. Madame—my little housekeeper — will join us in a minute, I hope. It's been supreme happiness to learn your countrymen and my own are no more at enmity with each other. You have heard the news, no doubt?'

'This afternoon,' the other said smiling, and inclining the head: 'a happy mercy, monsieur. England has hitherto been perhaps a little — just a trifle — uncomfortable for a Frenchman, even for a member of a Church sworn to promote peace and the amenities. The obligation to respect a holy office is sometimes forgotten. Let us pray better relations are now to prevail.'

'Oh, they should, they will, I'm sure,' Stanyhurst said. 'I hope,' he resumed, 'I may compliment you, *mon père*, upon recovered health. You were a little indisposed when last

I saw you, I think. You are better, Monsieur l'Abbé?'

The priest felt confirmed in the opinion that his host's voice was both harsh and cultivated. This is a hard man, he thought once more. 'Thank you, monsieur,' he said: 'I am now very well.'

'Ah, that is good.' Stanyhurst with a smile proceeded: 'Permit me to thank you for the letter you sent to my Club, Monsieur l'Abbé. It has given me the honour of entertaining you at supper this evening, and I'm very content, of course.' He presented the guest with a glass of sherry.

The priest was of the middle height, with large grave eyes, and a rosy, calm, good-looking face. A fiftieth birthday was lately passed, but the hair still plentiful and black. Beautiful lace at neck and cuffs provided, perhaps, a hint of the fastidious; while a possible secularity was suggested by the shrewd and taking smile, even if the steady gaze held a measure of the austere.

'Monsieur Stanyhurst,' he said in deep and gentle tones, 'it is pure delight to find myself here, in receipt of a welcome so generous.

I must extol the chance meeting in a wayside inn that afforded an opportunity to make your acquaintance, and to accept past hospitality in a country mansion. The peacock on the terrace, the lake, and owls crying in starlight. Delightful! Allow me, monsieur, to compliment you upon this sherry. It is excellent.'

The words had just been uttered when there was a sharp little knocking upon the door, and then the turning of the handle. Enter Lucy, rustling, swaying, swift, scented, slim, and wickedly lovely.

'Almighty God,' the priest thought, 'it's a *bébé!*' Nevertheless, he knew he was looking upon one of those expensive living *poupées* that may come out of Moorfields to be paraded in St. James. But the infant was not common. Lithe elegance was here, and assurance, and she wore the beautiful dress with an air. Below the tightly laced, pointed bodice, the swelling overskirt was caught up in loops fastened with soft bright ribbons, the underskirt belling below in vertical pleats to the slippers. A closely-fitted upper dress, and skirts expanded and swinging, gave the

delightful *bébé* the air of playing at being grown-up. The fabrics of the costume were provokingly expensive upon so young a body, and the delicate colours shook and the costly materials whispered as she moved.

'Suffer me to present Madame Blanchefleur, Monsieur l'Abbé,' Stanyhurst courteously said, and bowed to girl and priest before adding the latter's full name: 'Monsieur l'Abbé Bernard Jacotot.'

The priest, with a smiling kind look, gently lifted the girl's hand by the finger that he kissed. Raising the face from this homage, he looked transitorily, darkly, and with peculiar meaning into his host's eyes, and afterwards sank the head in resigned acceptance of the situation. Cluny Stanyhurst's expression was reserved and still.

'I think I have never before saluted so exquisite a little hand as this of my young sister's,' the Abbé said respectfully.

'It's clever and strong too, Papa,' the girl told him with a dimpling smile; 'it can manage a big horse, and tug a heavy oar, and has done so these many times.' Lucy sweetly laughed.

The priest's look was happy and surprised. 'Ah, so, my little daughter? You ride and sail, ha? It is wonderful. For me, there is no pleasure like that to be found in the sweet reaches of Thames, and a view of tall masts and crowded shipping in London River. The *Blanchefleur*' — all at once he was deeply thoughtful — 'yes, yes, the *Blanchefleur*, the fine ship, the great big sad ship. So splendid and so fated. And that other — that other! This is curious — very, very curious and unhappy. I must remember.'

Cluny Stanyhurst's eyes took an upward look. 'You're referring to one of John Company's Indiamen, I believe, Monsieur l'Abbé. She's been overdue too many months, but not yet reported missing. There's valuable cargo, I'm informed, and the Navy Office has been notified. All the same, hope's not to be abandoned, as you seem to infer. It's possible the *Blanchefleur's* a capture, in which case, seizure perhaps occurring while the Treaty was pending, the authorities may claim restoration. Peace was actually in the preliminary stage as long ago as the end of

January, I understand. Shall we go to supper?'

In the formal dining-room, a handsome mahogany table, without damask, and laid for the meal waiting under covers on a side-board, a gracious illumination of tapers in high, branching, silver candlesticks, cultivated blooms banked in harmonious tender colours along the centre of the board, and gleaming crystal, seemed to offer tacit, hospitable welcome. The Abbé, standing by the table, while host and girl attended in decorous attitudes, and black Joel, at the buffet, closed the eyes and joined white-gloved hands in the posture of worship, recited a quiet Latin grace. Cluny Stanyhurst, even during the prayer, was pricked in the vein of irony. A cynic of the town, a priest, a humble black, and a costly little girl beside sumptuous flowers. A touch of luxury and sin, and a petition to divinity. A farce, by God!

The host took the head of the board, the priest sitting at the right side, Lucy at the other. The arrangement seemed like the

symbol of a left-handed alliance, a stranger, happening to enter, might have thought. But perhaps the ecclesiastic was being designedly honoured. The placing of the chairs allowed unusual spaces to intervene between the three at table, but a symmetrical pattern was acquired by the grouping, and the effect punctilious and acceptable. Host, guest, and girl were in a sense in ceremonious isolation, and yet intimately bound by a decoration of flowers and candles, that seemed happily to unite them. The first course, green turtle, was immediately served.

The Abbé, seated opposite the girl, watched her with serious and kindly pleasure. Lucy's face, framed in short thick curls, the bare neck, and part of the small bosom, emerging from a dainty kerchief swathed about young shoulders above a low-cut satin bodice, and frail laces falling to the elbows from short sleeves, once more gave the priest an idea of youth sophisticated too early. A light rouge was not unbecoming on the creamy cheeks, but the girl, the Abbé thought, was far too young to begin to paint. Her mouth had lately been savagely kissed,

he saw. Poor beautiful child. And yet, and yet, how sweetly tempting! To be privileged to fondle and caress — a fierce joy there, he must allow, God help him. The Abbé was at once stirred and pitiful.

'Do you ever see the fashion prints arriving out of Paris, my daughter?' he asked, beginning to eat the turtle in a silver soup-bowl. 'It's laughable,' he resumed, 'to observe how French ladies have begun to adopt the pastoral style. Undoubtedly the mode's to be attributed to the proud young Queen. Her Majesty's pleased to be what may be termed poetically simple. Only outwardly, I'm afraid. Hauteur and the graces of Versailles ever march alongside the affectations by grottoes and streams. The craze may either pass or create a fancy for engaging costumes. You like, perhaps, the pretence of being an artless village maiden?'

'Oh, lawks, yes, Papa,' the girl replied with delight. 'It's ever such rapture to act the simple. But the fashion's monstrous expensive. These things I'm wearing are modelled on the French young women's

country dresses. Why, this fichu' — she touched the bosom — 'is alone worth more than any girl in a hamlet'd pay for a mort of dresses. It's what you say, Papa. The goings-on of that lovely girl Marie Antoinette. She's got a toy farm in a great huge meadow full of pretty trees and waterfalls, and plays the milkmaid, the papers tell us.'

'At the Trianon, little sister,' the priest agreed with an affectionate smile.

Lucy happily laughed. 'Sometimes I'm your little sister,' she said, 'and other times your daughter. La, let's be one or the other, your Reverence.' She looked with gay tenderness in his eyes.

'You must be both, and accept the fealty of one who loves you,' he said softly.

'Well, tell your little girl about how they carry on in those pleasure gardens in What's-it-called. Mr. Stanyhurst's been in France, and Italy too, and Holland. But me, although I was born foreign, I don't remember anything about that. I was a baby at the breast when mamma and me came to England.' She smiled and sighed. 'Have

you been to the French Court, Papa?' she added.

'Never to the Court; but once, in the train of a young nobleman, to that Trianon of which we were speaking, my daughter. The scenery is entrancing, you may well believe, and the comedy intriguing and pretty. Conceivably a pity that not rustic economy but burdensome expense must go to support a pastoral theatre, masquerade, and a brilliant artificial play.'

'You don't, Monsieur l'Abbé, approve of wealth applied to forward pleasure?' Cluny Stanyhurst, lifting an eyebrow in cool surprise, asked. He had become a little irritated by the guest's obvious interest in Lucy's talk.

'The purpose to which you refer may, God knows, be justified, monsieur. To promote pleasure in beauty, I would rather say, is perhaps a need of the soul. But possibly not at the expense of charity, Mr. Stanyhurst, not by means of the callous or cruel.' Perhaps, in the slightest degree, Stanyhurst flinched at the priest's penetrating look.

'Oh, men like cruelty,' Lucy said lightly; 'and so do some girls. Tell us some more, please.'

'There's nothing further to say, except that, as you have indicated, little sister, no tenant of feudal nobility could possibly afford the slightest article of dress so gaily flaunted at the Trianon. Laughing simplicity and rural happiness, supposed to be aped in formal bowers, do not, in France, exist. To pretend they do would be in the nature of mockery.'

'A sort of rumour that noblesse is riding for a fall is to be surprised among those who may be able to know,' Cluny Stanyhurst carelessly observed.

The priest looked very sad, and laid in the plate the stick of asparagus he had lifted to eat. 'One must have gone among the poor, monsieur, and seen bitter destitution — naked children grubbing for roots, and the famished misery of parents — to feel how true, unfortunately, that is. Many peasants, of course, possess little farms, and are not unhappy unless the seigneurs press too heavily for taxes. But labourers, as a rule,

are regarded as beasts of burden, I'm convinced. Burgesses, lawyers, doctors and merchants, those worthy classes, remain despised by the privileged. What interests my unworthy self — literature and the philosophic speculation in which France is supreme — brings in general nothing but a contemptuous twist to the noble lip. Arts are, perhaps, encouraged; but those who practise such things kept outside a superb circle. High civilization, sweet *politesse*, and cutting wit, monsieur, and yet, ah me! grinding poverty beside these stimulating ornaments. Yes, I look ahead in fear to a day of reckoning.'

'La, Father, get along with your meal,' Lucy said.

The Abbé started; then smiled, and inclined the head. 'Thank you, my daughter. The pretty rebuke is to be appreciated. A melancholy subject must never be encouraged at table.'

Talk for a while was of a trifling character. The meal proceeded. Cluny Stanyhurst was drinking claret; the Abbé Jacotot, and

Lucy, champagne. Black Joel waited in humble obedience and efficiency at the board. Then, while cold grouse was still being discussed, the girl very prettily asked the guest if, in France, he lived in a monastery. The priest, smiling, explained that he was not a monk, but an *Abbé commendataire*, one who received a revenue from a monastery, and at present was on a mission that, he believed, could not interest his daughter.

'A matter of trying to persuade a wealthy old lady of the Faith to apply a portion — all, if possible — of her riches to a certain purpose,' he said a trifle slyly, and smiled. 'It's a delicate duty, little sister, and requires a measure of finesse, of craft and diplomacy. Age is sometimes avaricious, one discovers. I am not very happy, perhaps, in my task. How much more pleasurable to sit at this good table and contemplate young beauty and grace.' He bowed his head over the board, looking quietly at the girl.

Cluny Stanyhurst said a little harshly: 'You're as expert in compliment as, no doubt, in diplomacy, Monsieur l'Abbé.'

For the third time the priest looked briefly and steadfastly into his host's eyes. The girl, piqued by Stanyhurst's tone, pulled, to annoy him, her young chest a trifle further out of the fichu, and made an impudent face. His expression dumbly assured her she should pay for the impertinence, and Lucy softly and disdainfully laughed. The wine had exhilarated the girl, and she felt like being happy and rude. The insolent pose, she knew very well, could be bravely achieved and was charmingly provocative. The Abbé was a dear, Lucy thought smiling, and she knew how, in spite of his holy calling, she could tempt the kind person to naughty sentiments. Let Cluny, the sweet monster, look out.

'A charming room,' the guest, looking here and there, remarked; 'good food, and wine, the gentle glow of candles, talk, and this ravishing adornment of flowers. A comely scene.' He cupped in white ecclesiastical palms the soft delicacy of a rose. 'Wealth put to happy uses,' he said. 'I've sometimes thought — perhaps should be censured for the idea — that Lord Jesus was being acute

when he said the poor are blessed. That Heart is very deep. By telling the meek they were to inherit the earth he possibly meant — again I hope I am not to be blamed — the grave.' The Abbé sat lost.

'There's that business of presenting the other cheek,' Cluny Stanyhurst observed with the hint of a taunt.

'And what, monsieur, could be more disconcerting than that? Eyes patient and wise, and an offer, dumbly resigned, to accept a further blow. A thing to stagger the malignant. One may imagine animosity quenched and startled. And even, perhaps, drowned in mirth.'

Stanyhurst swung the left hand into the right armpit, folded the right arm over the diminished left, leaned back in his chair, and gave the priest a puzzled look. Lucy laughed with the delight and mischief of a child. Cluny looked like he'd been choused. It was fun to see him there, all the frosty assurance kicked arse over tip. She clapped the hands. The Abbé quietly picked up fork and knife and began sedately to eat once more; and, after a pause, during which he

seemed to have been searching the mind for the solution of a riddle, Stanyhurst poured a bumper of claret, and deeply drank. Lucy lifted the fragile white forefinger in a signal to Joel, when the black removed her plate and put a shallow box of cherries, preserved in frosty sugars, in its place. The girl stuck, and lifted on a little silver fork, and contentedly ate, fruit after fruit.

The meal done, Stanyhurst and the Abbé rose and bowed to Lucy as she left the table. Black Joel opened the high door and remained bent in lowly respect while the girl in the gleaming soft dress went rustling past. Without looking back, 'The white room, Cluny,' Lucy called in high clear tones, and was gone, and the door closed. The two men sat down once more, and wine and claret glasses were recharged.

'Do you indulge in tobacco, Monsieur l'Abbé?' Stanyhurst asked the guest, tapping with a finger a decorative china jar.

'Now and then a pinch of rappee only, monsieur. I have the pounce-box here. I trust you will forgive me for using a powder

to which I'm habituated, instead of your own more excellent leaf. One becomes accustomed to an individual indulgence, I find, and prefers the familiar savour and sting of one's own poor snuff. You will pardon me, I know.'

'Please yourself in all ways, Monsieur l'Abbé. I am here only to be commanded.' Stanyhurst was polite and cold.

Joel brought his master's pipe, a saucer of shredded Pigtail, and splinters of match-wood to be lighted at the flame of a candle; flint and steel were unnecessary here. A delicate permeating odour of burning tobacco arose, and was in the nature of a consolation; something to make both men feel quietly intimate. The negro, with a pair of silver snuffers, clipped the drooping wicks of the tapers, and then waited submissively behind his master's chair.

Presently Stanyhurst said in an interested and serious voice: 'We were speaking, just now, about a subject, Monsieur l'Abbé, that, in certain phrases of yours, brought an unusual idea into my mind. Something, to

myself, new. Do you mind if I ask a question?' He raised a single eyebrow in perplexity and interrogation. 'The query I would like to be allowed to put is this: Do you find, as you seem to indicate, humour in the teaching of Jesus, Monsieur l'Abbé?'

The priest said calmly: 'Irony was implied, monsieur, I think. But why not humour also? One must read the Testament with a measure of insight. Once at least our Lord wept, and we are told here and there that he *looked*. We can understand both sadness of heart and the gaze searching the poor, denying soul. Not one of us, my son, but attempts to conceal. I would not wish to be more explicit, monsieur. We must all bow the head before the questioning eyes. But, too, the unequivocal judgment of divinity is tempered, I believe, by profound pity and sometimes — why not? — mirth.' The Abbé lowered the eyes and was thoughtful; then, lifting the head, he gave Cluny Stanyhurst a serene look. 'A brother of the Propaganda,' he resumed, 'arriving in Rome, brought with him out of the East — out of Cathay — a drawing painted by a Chinese.

It may illustrate, perhaps, the argument. Lord Jesus is pictured by this convert as young and smiling, and the disciples about him are represented as amused also. Our brother was told the latter are supposed to be showing appreciation of the story of one who put a strainer over a cup, while all the time, within and unknown, lay coiled a great camel that eventually was swallowed. The East!'

Stanyhurst, with a slanted smile, nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'deadly. My father, not often, sometimes, would allow me a glimpse of inexplicable matters that had befallen in his experience. He was troubled, I think. The miracles, Monsieur l'Abbé?'

'Undoubtedly all true in the strictest sense, monsieur. To ourselves, I mean. Prayers' — the priest looked closely at his host— 'were sometimes a help, one believes. There's a point on which we're contentedly divided — the piece of silver in the mouth of the fish.' He was silent; then, 'the fish,' he repeated, and drank. 'It's taken for admitted that, in this case, a playful moral only is intended,' the priest continued. 'By most of us, that is,

monsieur. Our Lord humorously — again why not? — conveys to the fisherman he is addressing, the fact that a trifling coin required to pay tribute, may, as soon as the hook has been taken from the mouth, be easily obtained by selling the catch. You follow me, monsieur? And in respect of gifts out of the waters' — the Abbé looked enigmatically into his host's face, and sadly smiled — 'these may be of interest to you.'

He put a hand under the flap of a pocket — the priest was wearing clerical dress, but not a cassock — and produced and laid upon the board, first a closed fan, worn and stained, and then a pair of rusted shoe-buckles. Stanyhurst gazed in frowning difficulty upon the tarnished baubles. They looked somehow pitiable and forlorn on the polished table beside blossoms and bright crystal and wine.

'The price of a poor girl's life, and, in the end, of no avail,' the Abbé sorrowfully whispered, and shook the head.

Stanyhurst, with a characteristic lift of eyebrow, and a blank gaze, waited in

silence. What's this crafty and entertaining black Papist after? – curse the fellow. God help the priest if he thought of Lucy as a poor girl — the abandoned little damozel'd very soon invalidate the idea, damn her. Some of the child's disgraceful lovely movements, and a touch of her laughter and tormenting insolence, were enough, stap him, to inflame all the twelve apostles and their Master. Cluny Stanyhurst gleefully smiled:

'Is it possible, Monsieur l'Abbé, that, as priest, in alluding to a girl's life, you're referring to what's called her honour? A fan and shoe-buckles seem, in my experiments, a very trivial and inevitably unavailing bribe to secure the object. Please forgive the satirical comment.'

'You may conceivably hear, I think, monsieur, soon or late — the story's not to be told by myself — a heartbreaking account of sorrow and misfortune that should knock on your soul. These poor gewgaws' — the Abbé, with a kind of veneration, slowly bowed the head over the shabby little fan and discoloured buckles — 'are eloquent of bitter failure. They summon for me no

picture of bygone folly and light happiness. The very uses to which the pretty ornaments, now lamentably vain, were once applied — coquetry, doubtless, and a girl's slippers pointed in the minuet — render the toys this evening all the more desolate.' The priest paused and seemed to listen. 'Is that rain?' he asked.

'A shower upon the windows, I think,' the other agreed. He put out a hand. 'May I look?' he said.

When the Abbé had given him the fan, Stanyhurst spread the damaged instrument with slow, gradual care until the frail chicken-skin material was taut along delicate ivory handles, and a bright, hand-illuminated scene, exquisite and small, disclosed — lovers kissing and a leering Pan making music for the embrace, on pipes that, the parchment here being holed, were invisible. Cluny Stanyhurst closed the fan, turned it over, and expanded it painstakingly in the opposite direction. A little coloured spectacle of mythical figures — a fondling god and goddess reclining on a cloud below a flying love — was now revealed. Stany-

hurst cautiously shut, and then returned, the expensive and injured trifle.

'You are perhaps disappointed, monsieur?' The priest was calm.

'Certainly, *mon père*,' Cluny Stanyhurst admitted smiling. 'I need not conceal from you,' he continued, 'that young women, apparently demure, possess and use fans that may be artfully spread to show either merely pretty or else wantonly naughty scenes. I hoped, I confess, in opening that frail bauble, to surprise one of the latter. Such a picture is not displeasing — especially when exhibited for one's happiness by shy young beauty. I allude, of course, in an indefinite pronoun, only to myself, Monsieur l'Abbé. May I be permitted to learn how these worn, engaging, female vanities came into your hands?'

The priest seemed, for a while, not to have heard; and in the quiet room a coal dropped in the fender, and a purring of flames was dimly audible. The fire had not been replenished, but was yet too full of strength in a mild night that made the comfort of a grate only a piece of empty ceremony.

The patter of rain and the dreamy sweetness of blossoms seemed in some secret way to commingle.

'This little fan and these tarnished slipper-buckles,' the Abbé now said, giving his host a mournful smile, 'come, monsieur, out of that great East Indiaman, the *Blanchefleur*. A total loss, an utter wreck, my son, Mary save us. The fine ship, the pride of owners, officers and hands, has been broken in pieces among surges and rocks. The coast of Africa, a savage place. I only know of a locality called Zaambas because — Christ's pity! — it's there the *Blanchefleur* struck and foundered.'

Cluny Stanyhurst stared and went white. 'God!' he said.

'Just so, my son.'

Host and guest looked at each other in silence. Then, 'Do you know what I know?' Stanyhurst, in a low voice, asked.

'I think, monsieur, you're referring to a priceless fabric the rumour of which is spread over the whole earth. Marco Polo stood once beneath the shadow of that splendour, and was afraid. Nothing so peerless, he

believed and wrote, had ever been stretched above a traveller's head before. The glory of what is known as the Fabulous Canopy, beneath which the Moguls sat in Diwan, became henceforth to the Italian voyager a miraculous thing. And, in Venice, he could not believe he had ever been in Hind and Howrah and privileged to look upon that wonder. Later merchants, scholars, and wandering priests, have brought to Europe reports of a daïs of alabaster, jade, and marble; of a throne wrought in carven picture work, and inlaid with unimaginable gems. But their private thoughts were not of palace halls builded among red-stone pavements, flowering pleasances, and the cool plash of fountains. Nor even of a throne. They were transported and lost, monsieur, in a dream of the Fabulous Canopy. And that Canopy, my son, was carried in the hold of the *Blanchefleur*.'

Stanyhurst, sunk in pale and frowning cogitation, roused himself to ask: 'And the thing is drowned in the sea? Monsieur l'Abbé, pardon the question, but are you certain of your information?'

The priest made a decisive movement of the head. 'I have it, monsieur, from a sure source,' he stated. 'The *Blanchefleur* is foundered.'

'And nothing's been salvaged?' Stanyhurst asked in a voice that held the note of awe.

The Abbé, gently, briefly, and with a gesture of the upturned palm, indicated the soiled trinkets on the table, and said: 'You see, monsieur.'

'Blessed God!' Stanyhurst whispered in a sort of fear. 'A pair of shoe-buckles and a fan!'

Rain could now be heard steadily falling, and the liquid, hammering sound seemed to echo and blend with a tinkling music, faint and agreeably melancholy, that Lucy was playing in some nearby room. The Abbé, to this accompaniment of spinet and water, might have been chanting, as he quoted in a raised and solemn voice:

'*Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,*
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea.'

'Christ,' Stanyhurst said. He took a full

draught of claret, and gasped. 'I'd like, Monsieur l'Abbé,' he resumed, 'to be permitted to confide in you — to reveal something that, very likely, should be kept secret. Wholly a personal matter.'

Stanyhurst at this point was made aware that the black man was standing behind him. Joel had uttered an involuntary, profound, weary sigh. His master threw a backward glance at the footman, and then abruptly nodded towards the door. The negro, in his apricot-coloured livery, moved thither, turned and deeply bowed, and so left.

'Can you,' Stanyhurst now asked, 'from where you sit, read the face of the clock, Monsieur l'Abbé? My own eyesight, although it annoys me to recognize the fact, is beginning to demand the use of a glass.'

'And I must use spectacles, monsieur. But I have a watch here.' The Abbé drew the instrument from the fob, and briefly manipulated a piece of machinery. There followed, sweet, silvery, and small, the striking of nine minute notes. 'Nine o'clock — not long ago, I hazard a guess — is passed, monsieur,' he announced.

'We have, then, time for a little further talk. Madame, I think, is very content to sit and sing for a while. What I felt I might divulge, *mon père*, is this. I sank — the term is now exact — a considerable sum — not enough, of course, to embarrass my estate, but still, even in the case of a rich man, an amount of substantial importance — in the adventure, yes, of stealing, and bringing home in the *Blanchefleur*, that unbelievable treasure of which we were lately speaking. I was, in fact, intentionally — and happily, I may add — assisting to accomplish a crime. To be plain, there were certain Army officers, and a number of Indian officials, who must comprehensively be bribed. The servants of John Company were all secretly — and necessarily, of course — committed to the iniquity. We may waive, I suppose, the responsibilities of those others. In my own case, can it, Monsieur l'Abbé, be taken for admitted that Nemesis has watched and spoken?' Stanyhurst coldly smiled.

'That, my son, is to be left only to the judgment of our Divine Lord.' The priest looked, with mild gravity, at his host. There

was silence for the space of a few minutes, and then Cluny Stanyhurst ceased to smile. The austerity, at once gentle and very serious, in the expression of the priest, was immediately relaxed. And now, with a measure of animation, he began to talk.

'I have,' he said, 'been, in this matter of a ship, intrigued enough to try to discover what cargo, apart from that splendid and peculiar Trophy, the *Blanchefleur* was carrying. Monsieur, I do not know if I am imparting information already within your knowledge. The vessel, I find,' he resumed, after Cluny Stanyhurst had committed himself only to an indifferent movement of the hand, 'was bearing precious stones, bullion, ivory, and further treasure, to the value of nearly three millions sterling. But here is what will refresh my memory.' The Abbé unfolded the small square of paper he had taken from a pocket, and read:

'Stored in the lazaret — above £800,000
'Gold bars, more than 900 in number — above £600,000
'Jewels, secured in boxes — above £900,000

'A great fortune to rest in the depth of the sea, my son,' the priest sadly announced.

'And that inventory contains but a portion of it.' The sound of rain kept rising and subsiding.

'A very pretty sum, no doubt,' Stanyhurst carelessly admitted, 'but what I'm curious to know is, if shoe-buckles and a fan are to be recovered out of a sunken ship, why not some part at least of the vast riches? The crew and passengers, all are perished?'

'As far as is known to myself, monsieur, only one person is escaped out of those extraordinarily bitter trials the survivors must endure in attempting to reach civilization. All that region of coast proved to be either terrifying wilderness haunted by savage animals, or else occasional sparse cultivation raised about the kraals of brutish aboriginals.'

'My God, Monsieur l'Abbé, I'd be exceeding willing to meet that informant of yours. This matter touches my poor self very nearly. It's to be presumed that what you've told me was derived from only one source. That lonely survivor, I mean. Is this correct, *mon père?*'

'He and no other, my son.'

'And this person is to be found and interrogated?'

'This very night, and in this house, if you will, monsieur. But interrogations, in point of fact, are not here applicable. Alas, the poor young man is only too anxious to relieve a heavy woe in talking. In telling all he knows, monsieur. But I must caution you that patience is to be exercised. If you are to hear the story of what, I believe, may be considered a prodigy in unusual history, and one of the most melancholy in the world — if you are to listen to this account of frustrated will, broken endeavour, and immense unhappiness — then, monsieur, be prepared to attend, as I have done, from beginning to conclusion, to a singular and mournful narrative of heroism and, yes, perhaps guilt. To the questionings of a soul, monsieur, in a torment — even so — of remorse and sorrow.' The priest regarded with an inattentive gaze the wine in the delicate glass, raised it and seemed about to drink, and then replaced the champagne untasted on the board. 'A haunted man,' he said

with the absent voice and eyes of one looking into great despondency.

Stanyhurst drank; and when he put down the empty glass, the pale cheek was flushed, and the eye kindling and a little wild. 'By God, *mon père!*' he cried, 'you've goaded me in the quick, and brought, I may let you know, curiosity to a point not to be refused.' The man was undoubtedly a trifle tipsy. He charged his glass again, and again drank. 'Is it conceivable I'm soon to hear the tale of the loss of the *Blanchefleur?*' he continued, staring at the priest; 'that one who's saved himself out of that wreck is to be here to-night? That I'm to learn how the miraculous Canopy went down and was drowned? Come, Monsieur l'Abbé, you've been insinuating what puts a man in a rack to discover more. Tell me, please, if the thing I'm conjecturing is true. You are in earnest in the assertion that a sailor out of the foundered *Blanchefleur* is to arrive at this house? And to-night?'

'To-night, my son, as I have said.'

Cluny Stanyhurst was happy. The face that had been heated and strange, was at

once composed. 'Good,' he said. A demeanour calm and remote, that, in fact, the man had never entirely abandoned, even under quick excitement, was, beneath the air of cool satisfaction, changeless henceforward.

'I thought I'd schooled myself to accept anything — anything, evil or fortunate, in the world — with unruffled equanimity,' Stanyhurst proceeded, 'and yet, Monsieur l'Abbé, just now I so far discarded principle as to betray agitation. Vulgarity! It must never occur again, I think. I'm not trying to excuse myself when I say the news I've heard to-night's been in the character of a facer. My father took far worse, and was always impassive. Behind you, *mon père*, hangs a portrait by Adamson of that estimable officer of the Honourable East India Company, whom I admire only for this — that he was able to preserve a blank, still face during the almost supernatural gibes, cold as snow, and cutting as knives, of his beautiful young wife, my mother. Emotion, he taught me, is to be deprecated. He learned the doctrine — it's implicit in Buddhism — in India. Stoic fortitude, one might call it, I daresay.'

'I think there may be a call on your fortitude to-night, my son. The tale you're to hear is not to be told in an hour, and is in part full of tragedy. Are you disposed to a late sitting?'

'I come, Monsieur l'Abbé,' Clunyhurst explained, glancing at the portrait, 'of a sire of expensive and hideous tastes. At the age of fifty — weary, no doubt, of the once fascinating and curious practices of nautch girls and costly Mongolian dolls — he leaves Khota-Pagur, comes home, and marries a lovely schoolgirl of fifteen — my sainted and peculiarly detestable mother. Your host, *mon père*, has inherited from both parents a caprice to salute sunrise in the dress in which he's supped. The morning, it's been discovered, is not too repulsive a time in which to sleep.'

'I too keep vigil, monsieur,' the other amiably replied, 'but not, I fancy, for the same purpose as yourself. And my daughter, Madame Blanchefleur? I think Madame may perchance care to hear a story at once sad, tragic, and strange. We are told by Aristotle that the heart should be cleansed

by fear and compassion. But perhaps Madame would wish to retire to bed?'

'Before Madame knew she was to have the felicity of meeting you, *mon père*, Madame to-night was to have gone to the play, and afterwards returned to an entertainment that would certainly have been prolonged until a morning hour. Madame, this afternoon, has been sleeping. The party she had designed to give, has been, without regret, postponed.'

'In that case, monsieur, allow me to make a proposal. A protégé of mine, a sailor, formerly in the *Blanchefleur*, a faithful soul, who to-day has been to an interview in India House, is to call for me at half-past ten o'clock. This is the survivor of that shipwreck. I like at night to walk either meditating or talking, rather than to use a coach, and it was deemed the hour would not allow time for you to become fatigued by my presence. The young man's name is Thomas Pidgeon, a ship's steward. He is loath to be separated from this unworthy priest, his friend, and asked, in fact, to be allowed to wait outside your house until my departure.

No storm would have restrained the youth. I told him, monsieur, that if he arrived at half-past ten, I would then be ready to leave. He will be here, and at your service, in that hour. Thomas Pidgeon knows all, ah me! that may now ever be known of the loss of the *Blanchefleur*. He was a servant in that fatal ship, and, monsieur, you shall hear from his own lips a story of disaster, extraordinary peril, and tears.'

'Madame and myself will be overjoyed, if the phrase be permissible in this connection. My little housekeeper listens entranced to wild stories of the sea, and all sailors are her friends. I've even invited old reprobate Jerdan under the roof. Merely to please Madame. May one know how you became acquainted with this Thomas Pidgeon, Monsieur l'Abbé?'

'Why not, monsieur?' There seemed to be a lull in the sound of rain; Lucy's voice singing to music was audible; and then, as the Abbé proceeded, the steady descent of dashing water recommenced. 'The young man,' the priest said, 'came to me a few days ago upon the street. His eyes told me he was in

misery, and even, indeed, a sort of strange fear, as he begged to be excused, and inquired if I were a parson. A "sky pilot" was the phrase, if I remember — the seaman's laughable term for a churchman. Our friend showed, somehow, the habit of being neither mariner nor citizen, and yet appeared to suggest now one, now the other. He was, in fact, a cabin steward. How the rain falls! More than a heavy shower, it is apparent.'

Stanyhurst snuffed two candles and charged and relighted the long-stemmed churchwarden pipe. 'Please continue, Monsieur l'Abbé,' he said.

'This young steward's reason for approaching me was singular. The lad, monsieur, in one of those compelling moods with which the priest is very familiar, wanted to unburden an unhappy conscience.'

Stanyhurst, the Abbé pausing in abstraction, said: 'Excuse a flippant and wholly impertinent interjection, *mon père*. I've always, in particular contingency, regarded the relief afforded by confession as a very good thing. Your Church, in her diplomacy,

has promoted an excellent practice. It is, in my idea, far better, for instance, that the young wife, after a delicious indulgence in what is regarded as sin, should go to the priest, and get assoiled of a naughty sense of guilt, than in a passing fit of remorse to burst in tears and inform her astonished husband. The smiling asceticism of cardinals — pray forgive me — seems, to myself, always to cover a sly knowledge.'

The Abbé looked at Cluny Stanyhurst, and, faintly smiling, shook a deprecating head. 'The young man of whom I speak,' he continued gently, 'is not of my communion. There was nothing, strictly, said in confession. The soul was troubled, monsieur, and, it must be thought, the lad had confidence in my sympathy and understanding. An instinct of the heart only, it's to be assumed.'

The other nodded: 'I understand, Monsieur l'Abbé.'

'I carried the poor youngster to my lodging,' the priest resumed, 'and there, in a parlour, provided minor refreshment in the shape of wine and *gateaux*. It was while we

were partaking of this, that I learned not only the strange case of the *Blanchefleur*, but also the yet wilder history of certain events that occurred after the wreck. One has heard, of course, remarkable tales of the sea many times. This specific story has become, for me, unforgettable. For, monsieur, in attending to the lad, it seemed I was hearing an Odyssey — the tale, my son, not only of a barque builded in eclipse and rigged with curses — the idiom, as you know, is to be found in Milton — but of ordeal and calamity as it were predestined. It was, I am aware, an assuaging avowal on the part of the wretched lad, this uncovering of the heart in a narrative of singular accidents, in which once, poor soul, he seemed to fail in certain brave instincts implanted by God. There was something in the nature of betrayal. We are not allowed to sit in judgment. I heard the confession with a sick and awful knowledge that, were I in circumstances such as those in which doom had thrown another, I too, monsieur — I too — had failed likewise.' The priest covered the eyes for a moment.

Stanyhurst sharply broke the clay stem of the pipe, and negligently observed: 'These candles, Monsieur l'Abbé, have achieved immoral wicks. Suppose we summon the black to snuff and remove the articles, and to clear the board, while ourselves adjourn for polite discussion elsewhere I look forward, I confess, with unusual curiosity, to the arrival of a person who's to furnish exceptional entertainment. Shall we join Madame?' He shook a small Indian hand-bell.

Lucy, the face entrancingly flushed, greeted the entrance of the two men by lifting a glass in which champagne was fresh and creaming. 'From Joel, massa's poor, faithful black,' she announced with a lovely smile; 'a present for a good girl, all lonesome in her pretty chamber.' Indeed, the room, white relieved by pleasing touches of delicate colour, tinted prints in narrow gilt frames, and the grace of flowers, was charming. Lucy approached the Abbé. 'I've had enough, Papa. This is for you,' she informed him.

'Thank you, my daughter' — the priest

affectionately smiled — 'the compliment is very pretty. I drink — thus — to your perfect happiness. It was delectation to hear,' he proceeded, 'in another room, my little sister's gracious touches upon the keys of the spinet. Unless it be by song, there is no solace, I believe, like that afforded by music. If the listening heart be sad, it is either uplifted to transient oblivion, or else continues in a melancholy, not, for a while, unpleasing. A little homily, observe, from Papa, my daughter.'

The girl looked, with delightful challenge, into the priest's eyes. 'Would Papa like his pretty child to sing?' she asked, cocking the head.

'A wicked little temptress, I'm sure,' the Abbé said playfully; 'yes, my daughter, please sing. I would prefer, of all things, that.'

The upward glance, and wry warning, in Cluny Stanyhurst's expression, advised the girl to be discreet in a choice of ballads. Meeting this look, Lucy tilted the curls, pursed the mouth, narrowed the eyes, and wrinkled the pretty nose in taking impu-

dence; then moved, in the whispering, lovely dress, to the spinet. A piece of music was placed in readiness. There was a liquid-sounding little prelude, and at once the young clear voice raised in song.

'*Dan Cupid, list my melody,*
And hover over Somer's Town
And at a window aiming down,
Oh, shoot a shaft for me.

For at her casement sweet to view,
A scornful girl my coming waits;
Her bosom full of witching hates,
Oh, pierce it through and through.
Look! where I kneel to you.'

The girl, still seated, and without turning, said: 'The person singing is meant, you know, to fall on the knees in that last part. There's a beautiful Italian boy does the piece in the theatre, and all the ladies are mad about him, because the words, you see, are broke so pretty. And more than one gentleman's touched too, I daresay. Those little cottages among the meadows and woods. We know — oh, Lord! — who lives in 'em.'

The priest was a little disturbed. And presently he was to be pleasured in addition. For the girl, leaving the music, came in swaying, youthful temptation, to stand before him, and say: 'You like this pretty one, Papa?'

'Ah, Jesus,' the Abbé, softly and gravely, replied.

Stanyhurst protruded the lower lip in morose vexation. Lucy, after allowing her eyes to look, for a moment, steadily into those of the priest, turned to select a sweetmeat from a little basket made of yellow, glazed matting. Taking a fondant between unblemished teeth, the girl went, crunching the frozen honey, to a couch upholstered in pale silk, on which she swung her pliant young body in a careless abandon, that, lifting the slippers upon the chair while she lounged, not only exposed slender silken legs, and buckled garters, but white glimpses of seducing bare skin beneath the sprawled skirt. Lucy with a writhing stretch of her body, arched the supple back, and deliberately pulled by this movement the little breasts out of the bodice. These were caught

only behind the laces of the fichu, through which, it seemed, a pair of snowballs, crowned with points of rose, now softly shone.

Stanyhurst was very well aware that Lucy was being naughty — and not so much on his account as to disquiet, and, who knows? delight the Abbé. 'I'll tear the little wanton in two for that!' he told himself with malice and happiness. A sudden, driven rain thrashed the windows.

Lucy, the sweetmeat dispatched, sat up from where she lolled, and adjusted and smoothed, with patting, frail hands, first the fichu, and then the rucked and crumpled lower dress. The girl's air was indolent, lazy, and amused, the head drooping to one side like a tired child's, and the soft lips parted a little. The eyes seemed veiled in languor.

'Please,' she said in pretty command, a trifle wistful, a trifle enticing, and with a trace of pleading; and looking sleepily at the Abbé — who caught the inquiring, drowsy, fondling gaze with joy — Lucy pointed to the floor. On the pale, quietly luxurious India carpet, a ring — a bloodstone set in

turquoise in a thin band of gold — lay, where it had fallen from the girl's hand, glinting in candle-light. The priest, with benevolent obedience, secured and slipped on the middle finger that Lucy (with dropped lashes) had extended, the sparkling circle. The action brought those two into a sort of contact emphasized by the girl's lifted eyes, her intimate and lovely look into the face of the Abbé. Cluny Stanyhurst was not able to see that the latter had gone white, nor that his guest looked stricken. Nor could he catch what Lucy had whispered. Lucy had whispered, low, and strange, and venomous, and utterly unchaste, the beautiful and dreadful words; and had laughed in a soft pleasure. Her glee was shocking.

But the priest was not outraged by an odious phrase in a young girl's mouth. The shameless words had stung the heart with luxury and a sort of unhallowed joy, and passion, heavenly and cruel, run him through. The Abbé's eyes seemed to dilate in wonder and interrogation; perhaps he winced. And now, woefully, he smiled, and made a pitying gesture. Lucy got, with easy grace, to

her feet. She was all at once the demure, yet self-possessed, girl; and the Abbé, in confusion and trouble, thought, for a moment, he had been mistaken in what, so lately, had been uttered. Lucy gave him a smile in which, somehow, mockery and compassion were united. The girl was quite at her ease.

A sort of composure, of rest and contentment, seemed, after a little, to have settled upon the room. Lucy, seated, was selecting prints from a portfolio opened across her knees, and, whenever any of the hand-painted figures touched her sense of fun, presenting the fashion-plate to the Abbé for inspection. The latter, in intervals of studying, and with kindly humour commenting upon, the pictures, kept looking with unhappy and thoughtful interest upon the girl's bent head. But whenever Lucy's gaze was lifted to meet his own, he smiled with affectionate intimacy. Sometimes the girl put her delightful head on one side, and seemed, with her eyes, tenderly to challenge his thoughts. Now and then, meeting

her look, the Abbé's smile would slowly fade and his expression become strange, and gentle, and grave. Once, with a little beatific laugh, gazing into his eyes, Lucy nodded.

Stanyhurst, who had been seated in a brooding humour, the arms folded, and the legs stretched resting on the heels, got up, walked across the floor, and pulled the bell-rope. He was, it is possible, a little annoyed by the interest the other two had discovered in the fashion drawings. But his thoughts, chiefly, had been concerned with the sailor, who, he hoped, would, very soon now, be in this room — so different from either the cabin of a ship, or the Abbé's Bolt Court lodging — and relating a tale of the sea that, in view of the loss involved, and the Abbé's hint of extraordinary occurrences, should be unusually engaging. It was capricious and meditative arrogance that once made him seem to be aware of a canopy of staggering richness and beauty beginning to stretch in exalted glory over dissolving ceiling and walls. The rain furnished the noise of fountains aspiring and showering in a palace garden, he thought. There was something

more. The slight intemperance of which he was conscious had provoked in Cluny Stanyhurst a sentiment of cruel power, and he dreamed he found himself, in merciless authority, seated on an Eastern throne. The vision dislimned. He pulled up the knees, and rose.

In answer to the summons of the bell, black Joel, with the look of one roused out of sleep, appeared, after a few minutes, in the doorway.

'Will you continue with champagne, Monsieur l'Abbé?' Stanyhurst asked. 'We may allow, I think, Madame to have just one more glass.'

Lucy made a face. 'Two,' she said.

'Very well — two,' Stanyhurst agreed; 'champagne, Joel, and the claret.'

The negro louted ceremoniously, and withdrew. Lucy looked at Stanyhurst. 'That chair, please,' she said; 'put it near Papa's.' Stanyhurst wheeled the easy, white, padded chair to the position Lucy had indicated. Joel reappearing, champagne and claret were poured.

'Tell Julie to get off to bed, Joel,' Lucy

called after the departing negro; 'I shan't want her any more.'

The white China clock, the face tinted with blossoms and love-knots, a shepherd and shepherdess as supporters, gave a musical little chime, and then, with prickling sweet notes, struck ten. And Lucy, who had been half-reclining in her chair, with arms akimbo, delicate hands clenched at the waist, uncrossed the legs, sat up with a rustling murmur of the rich dress, caught the breath on a sigh, and said strangely: 'Someone's coming.'

The priest looked open-eyed at the girl. 'My daughter ' — his voice was startled.

'I feel it! — I feel it!' the girl told him.

The Abbé turned to Cluny Stanyhurst in interrogation; and the latter, after giving the priest a dark, slightly sardonic look, smiled. Neither Stanyhurst nor the Abbé had yet mentioned the expected arrival of the young sailor. Stanyhurst said: 'Someone, if someone's walking, will be just a trifle wet, it's to be gathered.'

Lucy said a little wildly: 'Yes — yes. Wait! That's it — water. The sea — the sea!

A sailor.' Her eyes were happy, and she laughed.

The Abbé turned pale. The rain, in sudden, assailing fury, charged the panes. Stanyhurst, looking at the priest, said: 'Tell her.'

The Abbé went and kneeled on the carpet before the girl. 'Let me take your hand, my daughter,' he said, smiling. Lucy, half abashed, it seemed, surrendered the hand, and looked, curiously shy, curiously serious, smiling a little mournfully, into the priest's face. The girl, indeed, here betrayed a mood wholly unexpected. The young and lovely face was very thoughtful.

So the girl, pensive and grave, with yielded hand, watched the priest's face. The Abbé must steel the heart, and not allow the will to falter and plunge and be lost in the depths of those mild and calamitous eyes. All the world, and the sad wisdom of the world, concentrated in a clear and haunting young gaze, he thought. And in order not to be subjugated by that contemplation — not to wait in bliss and silence — the priest began to talk. The girl, in quiet patience, listened.

Abbé Jacotot said in kind and serious tones: 'There was a great ship, my daughter — a noble ship — the boast of the merchants — that once, on a wild coast, in wild weather, foundered. Some of the passengers and crew escaped, and came, destitute, ashore. Some — many — perished in the seas. That was a desolate, strange, wicked strand, forbidden, by reason of unusual currents and whirlpools, very powerful in their action, and weather, and cruel rocks, and continuous heavy surges, and breakers rolling and thundering, to ships. And here the vessel struck, and was broken, and went down. She was called the *Blanchefleur*.'

Lucy, with no other movement than that of the lips, and with a steady gaze, said: 'Go on, Father.'

'It was, as I say, a savage country to which the shipwrecked souls were delivered. There were natives, rude, and sullen, and uncouth, and, yes, I suppose, simple. They were, when any gain was to be achieved, heartless. Sometimes there was barter — men and women out of the lost ship exchanging rescued valuables for food — and sometimes,

on the part of the aboriginals, mockery, and evil gestures, and threats. The hapless survivors, cast away in a forbidding land, began a long and dreadful march. No succour was at hand; and civilization far off. Some were slain, some kipnapped, some died in the way. Starvation and sickness stalked alongside. Two, at last, out of all that company of women, and children, and men, seemed on the point of escape. And then one of these twain was — dead. The other came out of the wilderness into safety. This is that one, who, to-night, is to tell yourself, my daughter, and monsieur here, the story of these misfortunes and that delivery.'

The girl sat rapt; the colour of her eyes changed; and she said: 'He is coming'; and then: 'He is here, Father.'

The Abbé, still kneeling, turned a grave face from the girl's to Stanyhurst's; but the latter's expression was remote and cold. Bending slightly the head, he gave the priest that look in which the upward gaze was a little disconcerting.

'Thus,' Cluny Stanyhurst observed, 'in a simple statement, does the pure and innocent

young soul advance itself into the realms of prevision.' The voice was calm, and not the least suspicion of the satirical to be noticed. Rain smote upon the window.

The Abbé gently released, after saluting her finger, Lucy's hand; got to the feet; and, once more smiling, bowed deeply to the girl. 'I am confident you are right, my daughter. He is here.'

Thomas Pidgeon was, in fact, there. But first, black Joel. The negro knocked upon the door, and then was revealed. He bowed to his master and said, in that throaty, drawling voice so utterly different from the European's: 'A person, sah, come for call upon him Reverence.' In the silence that ensued, three pairs of eyes were turned towards the door. Stanyhurst said: 'Show him in.'

The negro looked affronted; his mouth gaped. 'Please, massa, him . . .'

'Show him into this room.' Stanyhurst was curt.

So Thomas Pidgeon appeared; and the entry of the young ship's-steward seemed to be accomplished to a louder violence

of rain without, and a hush within, the chamber.

He was wet. His shoes made moist imprints upon the soft richness of the carpet; the worn cloth of the overcoat was soaked. Thomas Pidgeon turned the three-cornered seaman's hat round and round in his hands, and the pale-blue eyes, with the blindish look of one accustomed to watery desert, seemed at once to take in the room in which he made so contradictory a figure, and the persons he found there, and to be vacant in withdrawn thought. The expression did not conspicuously alter when this far-staring gaze was on Lucy's face. But there was nevertheless a change — a momentary touch of wildness and amazement. Thomas Pidgeon was a thin lad, the light hair further bleached by tropical suns, the face at once young and gaunt, and pallor showing under the tanned cheeks.

Cluny Stanyhurst said with courtesy: 'Come in, please, Mr. Pidgeon. This young lady is the hostess. I am Mr. Stanyhurst. Perhaps you will give the wet coat to the servant, who will carry it to the kitchen,

where it shall be dried against your departure.'

Thomas Pidgeon said: 'Thank you, sir, I'm sure. But I never thought to stay like. I just come to fetch the priest along home. This fine saloon, so smart and pretty and all Bristol fashion, it ain't for such as me, sir.'

'It's your own, Mr. Pidgeon, whenever you will,' Cluny Stanyhurst assured him with a smile. 'Come, allow the servant to take the coat and hat, and remain and talk with us a little. This young lady has always been fond of sailors, and never tires of listening to their stories. Perhaps, after you have had a little refreshment, you will tell her about one of your travels. Adventures on the ocean, and in far lands: these are the young lady's delight. And if ever she hears of any sailor who has suffered shipwreck, she cannot rest until she has met him and heard his story.'

The priest put his hand upon the steward's shoulder. 'The lady and gentleman, my son, wish to be very friendly. They have heard you have sustained shipwreck, and a heavy trial in a far-off place. The young lady, particularly, would like to hear about these

things. I have just told her you might, perhaps, if only to please myself — but you will do it, I believe, for her own sake — relate all you know about the loss of the *Blanchefleur*, and your journey and hardships in the African wilderness.'

The sailor looked at Lucy; and he started — he quailed. The movement, the look, were momentary, but not to be mistaken. 'I can't,' he said.

'Oh, I think you can, my son. The young lady is very gracious, and the gentleman, too. These are friends of mine, Pidgeon, lad, and I hope you will regard them as they wish to be regarded — as friends of your own also.' The Abbé patted the sailor's arm.

'I could say it all over again — yes, and very willing, too — if it was only you, Father, and the fine gentleman. But that one — that one — ah, that one — No!'

'My son!' — there was slight admonishment in the priest's tone.

The sailor hung the head. 'She puts me in mind of that other,' — the voice was almost inaudible.

The Abbé said briskly, kindly, and with

smiling persuasion: 'Off with the coat, my lad. We're all going to sit in good companionship, and then you'll tell us about the *Blanchefleur*, and how you went that long march. It'll do you good, my son, I know; and we shall all be very glad to hear the strange adventure, and to thank you for your generosity in telling it. For your own sake, and ours, and the hospitality of this house, dear lad, sit down with us, and let us hear your tale.'

'Very well,' the other said. Rain whipped the panes. And in silence Thomas Pidgeon gave the seaman hat and stormcoat to the black servant. 'Not so wet underneath, I reckon,' he said; 'the slops'll serve. Them wadmarels is prime. But I've mucked this fine carpet somethink terrible, no mistake.'

'A pleasure to see evidences of an arrival that's to our advantage, young Mr. Pidgeon,' Stanyhurst said.

The lad had not been conscious of these words. His look — the eyes wide open and dazed, and the lips parted — was now fastened upon the advancing Lucy; and, obviously, the concentration of the gaze,

and the expression, as of one lost and astonished, showed him heedless of all except the disturbing, beautiful girl, and his own groping thoughts. As if in time with the soft tapping of Lucy's shoes upon the carpet, and the murmur of the girl's dress as she approached, the head of the young sailor was drawn slowly back. But the pale-blue eyes never wavered from a fixed, and somehow comfortless amazement. A depth of wondering grief, homeless lamentation, was in the look. The girl's air, at first that of one coming to console and pity, was suddenly, as if prompted by a quick mental suggestion, changed.

It was changed. It was a swaying flower, an expensive little street girl, saucy, insulting, seducing, and invulnerable in daring assurance, that now, palms on hips, stepped towards the young sailor. She had an immodest and graceful action of the thighs; and when at last she stood before Thomas Pidgeon, the eyes were intimately valiant, the mouth inviting with pouts, and the tongue in one corner of the lips.

'Hallo, Gilpy' — Lucy's undressed slim

body was, even while in bodice, panniers, and spreading skirts, suggested by a pliant movement of the small bosom and waist — 'what cheer, laddie!' Her eyes were bold as they measured him, her mouth a smiling challenge. 'We're all splicing the mainbrace. Give it a name, me lad. It's a dirty night.'

The youngster jerked back the head; the face was creased, and the eyelids flickered. He might have taken a blow. 'Don't, miss, for Christ's sake,' he said.

The girl laughed. 'Oh, I'm one o' the right sort,' she told him, rocking on toes and heels.

Good God, the priest thought, this adorable and wicked child is rallying the poor lad; yes, and with design, too; Blessed Mary, she'd draw him out of hell, the lovely little saint.

Tears ran down the young sailor's face.

Lucy gave a derisive, acrid laugh. 'Look at cry-baby,' she jeered. 'My God, a sailor, and doing the mollycoddle! A blubbing young swab. Where's me bold lad? — where's me fancy? — why, there he is, the one you're so set on, drowned in eye-water. Like some softy of a gal, and no damn error in the

reckoning neither. He ain't fit for no more than a dirty hooker. And him so come-on and sassy like, one time. Here, how long's this going on?'

'You look like her,' the youngster said, and fairly sobbed. Lucy put grappling soft arms about his neck, and with close, abandoned kisses took the tears upon her mouth until they ceased to run.

The clock, after a musical little chime, struck eleven.

The sailor was beside Lucy on the couch; the girl had taken one of his hands, and was holding it upon her young bosom. The Abbé, the finger-tips joined, sat looking into space. Cluny Stanyhurst, with folded arms, and an inscrutable look bent upon the pair on the couch, lounged against the mantelpiece. Lucy gave him a beautiful stare, and then glanced towards the wine. The man filled a glass and brought, still with unfathomable eyes, the champagne to the girl. She put the lips to the wine, and indicated the place the mouth had touched as she handed the glass to the youngster. 'Drink from

there, Tommy,' she said, the point of a finger touching the rim; 'that's the lucky spot your saucy lass has kissed.'

The sailor, cupping the delicate crystal in both palms, gave Lucy a strange, rapt smile. He drank a little, looked at her again, and, after she had gravely nodded, took the remainder. Lucy received the empty glass.

'Champagne,' she said; 'good, eh? Makes you feel like you want to sneeze and laugh all at once. That'll set you up; cock your tail, I reckon, me pretty boy. You're the one for the lush, no mistake. Well, well.' Lucy handed the glass to Cluny Stanyhurst; and he saw, with a cold face, that her look was dim with tears.

The Abbé, still gazing at nothing, said: 'Begin, my son.'

The sailor seemed to disenthral the mind of a far thought. Lucy was now holding in the lap one of his hands. 'Spin the whole twist, Father?' he asked.

And the priest, employing in indulgent catholicism a term he had once relished in the lips of the sailor, said happily: 'The whole bloody dippy, my son.'

A look as if upon distant things came into the sailor's eyes. 'Well, here goes, then,' he said in a kind of sudden resolution, and was all at once alert.

And the young ship's-steward begins his tale in this London room that is hung and furnished in a taste at once simple and very expensive. The priest of Rome, personable and quiet, is seated listening and contemplative. The man in town dress, with an unseeing upward look in the eyes, and upon a pale and handsome face an expression that conveys not the least hint at what may be his thoughts, is stretched back in a chair. The girl and young sailor are resting hand in hand upon a couch. The sailor, a discrepant figure in that chamber, is, it may be supposed, at first a little embarrassed and doubtful. He uses a hesitating nautical vernacular before growing more composed – more certain of himself and accustomed to the audience – when he begins to employ words expressive of an emotion that in the course of the story has invaded his mind. Rain falls without. Thomas Pidgeon speaks:

'This what I'm going to tell ain't no bender, and it ain't no cuffer neither. It's all gospel, and I wish it weren't. I wish it was just a fake — a yarn like you'd buy in a shop. But it ain't, more's the pity. It's truth.

'Everything that matters, it begins the time I was sixteen, a lad doing the waiter in

Harry Windle's Tavern, alongside India Quays, near Brunswick Basin, London River. All sorts was served in Old Harry's; Johnny Chinks, Lascars, Maltese, and Jews, along with deck hands, lightermen, crimps, wharfingers, and respectable thieves. But them was the riff-raff like. There was a better class too, that come earlier. It was a good, honest house. No sarabanding nor sprees, and girls obliged to come in quiet and go straight upstairs. When they don't, there'd be shindies, likely, you'd find, and sometimes knives out. We had a bruiser or two to deal with cases.

'The times 'twas most peaceful at Old Harry's — along about midday and forepart of afternoon — captains, shipmasters, clerks, and such, would fetch along for mungy and a glass. All nautical and quiet. Talk about cargoes and ships and passages. And sometimes a handsome tip.

'It's so I meets Captain Mayne, master of a West Indiaman. First time I waits on him he'd just made port out of Western Ocean, South America and the Islands; a stout red face, homely, and sort of genial, a fine

figure, looking at you very steady. About the second day, he gives me a gold piece, and after that I was always willing he'd tip me another, and kept smart and polite in accordance, but he never done so. That was his cunning. I remember Captain Mayne very well. He liked a dollop of sangoree before he took dinner, and swipes during. He was friend of a Captain of John Company's, and that's why he come to the house, so's to be handy. His friend, Captain Gunther, never fetched up at Windle's.

'One day Captain Mayne gives me that look of his, and he says: "Time you began to see the world, me lad, a strapping youngster like you". I weren't no strapping youngster, being on the lean side, and not so strong's some, but I never said nothing. "There's ships and wide oceans," he goes on, "and now and then a bit of a hurrah with them little come-hither lasses. This ain't no place at all for a likely young chap, same's you. The sea, me boy, the sea — that's the life."

'I told him I weren't no sailor. "What of it?" he says, "and no matter. Here you are,

alongside India Basin, and the skippers of John Company fair weeping their eyes out on account they can't get no stewards as anyways come up to mark. Lookee, sonny, now. There's a great East Indiaman all in trim for sailing. Yes, and the captain he'd jump at the chanst of giving a lad same's you a good berth. The primest, I ought to say. As fine a ship as ever walked blue water, the *Comorin*. I'm going aboard frequent, and could fetch you along too, some time. Day after to-morrow, say. You see stout Old Harry, and he'll agree pronto, and no error. In fact, I've spoke him myself, just by way of doing the generous for a lad's took me fancy, yes, and any other skipper's who'd clapped eyes on the fine boy. No one so bright and brisk as Tommy between here and the down-unders, and who knows it better'n myself?"

'He looks at me same's he was lost in respect and admiration, and makes a motion of the hand like he was caressing me all over. "That's me good lad," he says. "Well," he goes on, "I hope I ain't been whistling psalms to the taffrail, and all me words in vain. Wages profuse, too. It's a billet's got

jam on it, there's no mistake about that. All callao, I lay, and above board. You ought to be under the Gridiron, if anyone did," he says.

' "In the fire, sir?" I asks. Them words was prophetic, but I never knew it.

' "Under John Company's striped ensign," he sort of shouts in a hearty, laughing voice. "That's the old rag's going to wave over a brave boy going step by step up the ladder of promotion and renown. Quick as a flash. If I was in them shoes of yours — and I wish I was, and had your chances — why, I'd be aboard the *Comorin* in a brace o' shakes, and me heart bursting with joy, too. Now you think it over, and then I'll carry you along in the jolly-boat just like I said, day after to-morrow." Persuasive as you please, Captain Mayne. He slaps me on the back. "What cheer, mate?" he cries, sailor fashion.

'Well, I thinks, foreign parts, why not?

'And that's how it happened. Captain Mayne, he'd laid a bet with Old Man Gunther he'd find him a coupla stewards before the *Comorin* sailed. I was one of 'em.

They always demands smart servants at the Captain's table in these John Company's ships. The ladies, you see, and high-ups in the India Government, and them guzzling nabobs, and such.

'So two days later I goes off with Captain Mayne to the *Comorin*. That was a fine oak ship, just like I'd been told, going up in a great bulge; with huge beak-ends and stern-works, gay like pictures with coloured figures and scrolls; and fore, main, and mizen masts of a height and size to frighten a body. She was all bright orange-colour. At the stern was the flagstaff with the Company's big ensign. We goes up the battens holding on to the hemp — it were like climbing mountains — and so comes aboard by some big bundooks in red trucks, the muzzles pointing through ports in the bulwarks. "Jimminy", I thinks, "here's a warrior! — here's a Persian of a first-rater!" Why, I got a touch o' fear when I finds out the dimensions and prosperity of her, reaching up out of the river. And I've forgot to mention she had a figure-head of a Hindu soldier, all turban and armour, the colours lavish, and very im-

pressive. The crew calls this ornament The Lady, I finds, in spite of the fact it's a man.

'The *Comorin* was real fine, as I tells you, and the luxury of her fair dazzling. Even among all them ranks and thickets of great ships below the Bridge, she stands out magnificent. Or so I thinks, being close and touching, as it were. You hears sailors of other lines say "Foul as a East Indiaman", but I never found 'em anything but spick and span, and run true as clockwork, too. Captain Gunther's cabin was finer'n any room, when Captain Mayne takes me along there. Old Man Gunther's between thirty and forty, I reckons; he's got a handsome face, a bit stern, and the eyes severe even when he's smiling. He smiles now, but I thinks afterwards he done so on account o' Captain Mayne winning his wager, and no friendliness to me. He's dressed in stock and fal-lals, pale blue coat, and pewters, white waistcoat and breeches, silk stockings, and shiny buckled shoes, very much the beau. I can see him now.

'Well, I signs on, and there I am — ship's steward, age sixteen, eyes and features such

and such, height and appearance this and that; it was all wrote down. I finds I'm in the forecastle; mess-room by day, and berth with slung hammocks afterwards. Lanterns, or candles in tin basins, the lights. The ship's company was seventy-six souls, and there was lascars in addition. I never counted the passengers, but they made up some thirty, at a guess. It was a job getting the *Comorin* out of the great press of ships in London River, but managed clever; and so we goes down Thames to open sea. That was my first voyage, and thus I remembers it very well. But you don't want to be dundered with this part, I reckons.'

'Oh, we do! — we do! The whole dippy, the whole dippy, please, Tommy lad,' Lucy pleaded. 'I'd stay a week along o' you, and never want no sleep neither. Crack on, me sailor and me own true love. We're all here till daylight. But first, let's freshen the hawse; let's go round the buoy, lad.' Again she made Cluny Stanyhurst the silent request, again she touched the wine with soft lips, and again the sailor drank.

'Look here, miss, I'll be half round the

bend if this ain't pawled,' Thomas Pidgeon said a little ruefully.

'Never admit it, sweetheart,' Lucy cried gleefully. 'You're the macaroni. Champagne and the girls! Hurrah!' Her eyes, however, were sad as she handed Stanyhurst the glass.

'Well, there I was with me dunnage in the forecastle,' the sailor proceeded, 'hail-fellows all round, passing Tilbury, rounding the North Foreland, striking the Strait of Dover, and entering the Channel, the *Comorin* all apoise and going Bunt Fair, and cheers to and from every vessel passed. By and by we runs into blashy weather and blunks — squalls, you see — and then I gets me first touch of sickness, and musters me bag — throws up — more'n once, but never so's to prevent duty. After that, even when there was a full gale — blowing marling-spikes, as they say — I never took no real quavers and qualms. A proper sailor I was. And I likes the duty too, at the Captain's table; it was much like Windle's Tavern, only trotting grub from the galley instead of out of the kitchen, and the company so good, and much richer and all,

and everyone doing the genteel. To all appearance, I mean. I could tell some news about that, I lay.'

'And you will too, Tommy,' Lucy said, 'or your little lass'll never smack you another kiss. She don't like shy boys.'

'Well, these passengers, they was all sorts, and worth watching,' the sailor resumed. 'Good as the play. But I can't relate more than about one or two like, or I'd never be done. I begins to rake in tips for little services, and sees myself returning to Old Harry's as a customer to blue same, and act the rich, and sway all top ropes, with the best. Presently I'll tell about one of these rewards I gets. I think I will; I don't know. Not too delicate it's not.

'The first big tip I snaffles is from a gentleman, very stout, and red, and affable. He always takes simpkin peg — that's champagne, but he liked his laced plentiful, half and half, with brandy — before noon; and he would smile like a Cheshire, smack the lips like a gun, roll up the eyes like he sees visions, and rub the hands like he's fully satisfied, before lifting same off the tray.

A bit of a swill, but not more than some others aboard. They all indulges in lush, far as I sees, and simpkin known as "the usual." Another gent as was lavish with tips — but he was new married — is a fine quiet man about fifty, a beak or something o' that, as had a schoolgirl sort of wife — not more'n fifteen, the chick didn't look — very devoted. You'd think otherwise, but no. She hangs on his arm like she couldn't love him enough, and thus they walks the decks. There was some handsome young grabby officers in crimson jackets, smart's can be, gay as lords, and same as girls likes, but would she look at 'em? No. One of these pongo ensigns had his fancy took in another direction, though, and that's what — but I don't know — I'll blow the gaff about, by and by.'

'He's *bon conteur*, Tommy,' the Abbé remarked, 'whether he knows it or not. He'll tell us, I think.'

'Well, and so I will too,' the sailor admitted, 'but it don't come into this part. It's later, and the scene tropical. Round about the time I'm mentioning, we was

approaching Grand Canary, following winds, and sweet summer's weather every day and all night. The ship's band begins to discourse harmonious on deck as well's in the saloon. A band of strings it was, and the triangle and drums, fetched along o' purpose, and all the airs of town. Moonlight, or stars, fiddles agoing for minuets, and reels, and Sir Rogers with the girls and young women, like roses and blooms with the rouge and swinging dresses. Grand.

'There was a girl didn't dance, the dress not being accommodated. She was a little Begum, or whatever it is, married to a oldish official, and very play-acting like, with big rings in the ears, and bright Cashmeres — that's a Johnny Jingle — and a sort of sweet creamy face, and eyes that mournful and lovely. Indian she was. Once I carries her a glass of refreshment, and them eyes looks and looks, before she slips a fat tip on me salver, and smiles pathetic.

' "All damn fine, eh, jig-jig, khalishee?" she says, and winks. I didn't know what she was after, but young women gets like that in ships, you'll find.

'Grand Canary's the first landfall, a flatish island, beaches and palms, and a little city. It belongs to Portugals or Dons; I never knows which; and it's called Grand Canary because you can acquire a grand canary there, wicker-work cage and all, and him piping up like hey go mad. I goes ashore with another steward, who tells me he speaks all the lingoes ever created. He didn't know whatever it is occurs in Grand Canary, all the same and no consequence, for dumb signs, and winks for punctuation, they was all kandoo and quite sufficient. We loads up two ship's boats with astonishing fruits, and comes aboard again. This was the first dicky flurry — spree ashore — I ever takes.

'It was hotter'n it'd been so far, probable on account of the big ship being under bare poles while we lies there. There's always a breeze, and cool enough, wherever it is, as long as muslin's drawing. But here, hot. "Warm, eh?" I says to one of the old hands. "Warm it is," he agrees, "but wait," he says, "until the old hooker's off the Coast, or in the Bay of blasted Bengal, with the pitch making bubbles in the seams, and Old

Jamaica blazing fit to pole-axe you, me brave lad." The old shell-back then borrows some hard — that's plug tobacco — off'n me. All hands is hail-fellow with stewards, hoping to go shares in the thefts, you see.

'Well, the boatswain pipes, and the monkey's orphans — them's fiddlers — scrapes away, and hands jumps into shrouds, and goes aloft, and lies on the yards, and makes canvas, and so we's off once more. I sees Grand Canary only once again, and then all's different — all's different.

'True enough, it was hot all along down Africa, and no error; cook — slushy, he's called — sweating good into the coppers in the galley, and an awning spread for passengers. I gets a bit lonesome, times, cogitating how far we's away from London, and going farther all the while. Never much of Africa to be seen, however; a cape, maybe, far off, or a mountain, misty-like, and perhaps only a cloud too. Bright day, and stars tremendous of nights. The music, and gay times, and guzzling, goes on perpetual. And there's love-making, natural.

'So we runs down Africa, and the good ship with a bone in her teeth, and going sweet. The flying-fish begins to scutter, and I'd always wanted to see the critturs — but they weren't so plentiful like I hears in Old Harry's. It's the Caribbees, seems, where you gets 'em leaping perpetual, in them long curves, each side of a travelling vessel. Porpoises racing with the ship most days, and once or twice a whale spouting far off. Often just empty heaving seas, with a sort o' glaze like melted lead lifting and falling, and the skies like dazzling tin. Nights flashing stars all glorious, or a moon bright like day. And here and there — but amazing how lonely sometimes — ships. Some rovers rigged lateen, and some vessels saluting with colours and signals. It was always good to see sails, and the telescopes pointing, and lady passengers fluttering and asking.

'Along about now, we was eight or nine weeks out of London Port, I daresay, and felt like we was in the *Comorin* for ever.'

The clock, after a musical little chime, struck midnight.

Lucy pressed a little closer to the youngster's side, the overskirt flattened on this and protruding on the other hip, and drew his arm about her waist; the costly dress glowed softly against the worn jacket and breeches; the girl's slippers, the gleaming buckles, and a glimpse of cherry silk stockings, were like expensive delicacy beside the shabby and patched. Stanyhurst took a little claret, and the Abbé a thoughtful drink of champagne. There was silence until Thomas Pidgeon again took up his story.

'So—week or fortnight later; I can't be exact about the number of days—we rounds Cape Good Hope, and crosses Table Bay. It weren't so hot, these parts. A good many leagues away, but plain's a pikestaff in that clean, bright air, looms a whopping great mountain, with the top like it's been sliced flat by the sword of Jesus. And hereabouts—and perhaps owing to more bracy air—the cuddlings becomes a trifle more remarkable, and the tips handsomer. And, now, I daresay, I might speak about a little matter of a certain special gratuity, as it were. This is where it happened.'

Lucy put a scented little palm against the speaker's thin cheek, and there was a delicious movement of her body. Rain steadily fell.

'Well,' the sailor resumed, 'I'd better blab, I suppose, if only on account of what followed, and due to same. There was, I should tell you, at the Captain's table, and near him too, by way of honour, a tall beautiful lady — thirty she was, likely — and her husband, not much older, very sallow, and something irritable, by her side. I never saw a face more lovely and more proud-like than that lady's, but I needn't say her name. She had a title, too, and so did he. I wish I hadn't mentioned that, somehow; but there, it don't matter after all, I reckons.

'Just opposite this fine, haughty beauty, there's a lobster officer, very trim, in a tight cavalry jacket, and so young as to be laughable. Seventeen or eighteen, I lay. He was sweet to look at, in spite of a sort of weary, smooth, boy's face. Fine eyes he had, like a young woman's, and lazy proud. He had a cool sort o' drawling voice too, high and languid, and looked like everything was a dead

tedium. Perhaps what he done was a dead tedium also, and only a piece of duty like, and to please a lady he didn't care two straws about.

'Stewards they soon finds out if a lady's in love, and this one was, no mistake, in spite of appearing far away from such, according to manners and that. She was fair smote, and I knows it. When the boy officer goes strolling the deck, with a Hindu servant holding a white umbrella over his head, her eyes follows him, and if he's with a young lady, you could see — I could, I mean; I don't know about others — she was in a torment. Women sometimes goes all out for them slim, lackadaisical young chaps, though why, I don't know.

'Now, it was part of my duties, after the dancing and such was over for the night, to collect and place orderly the deck-chairs. There was all kinds; bamboos, and wickers, and some you could lie in and sleep. One of these last, I finds it's missing, and goes hunting the deck for same. And by and by I discovers it, drawn up in a shadow where the moon can't reach; and the Earl of Hell

himself'd be flummoxed same like me, seeing what was going on there. For there was two people in that chair. I knows the young horse officer's back as well as I knows anything, and the lovely lady's face was looking over his shoulder, her features just a sort of moony shadow in that place, but plain enough to observe. Her eyes looks slap into mine, but seemed they don't contemplate nothing but private thoughts. I creeps away. I not only creeps the length of the ship, thinking many things, but I creeps into the hammock too.'

The Abbé chuckled. 'Very good,' he observed.

'You got to be born to it, in my opinion,' the young sailor continued, 'to manage like those two did. Next day the lady's just as usual, and the boy ensign more so. I began to think I'd dreamt about what I saw and it was no more than a figment. So I'm the more surprised when the lady she says to me — this was on deck — in a lofty but kind sort of way: "Mr. Pidgeon?" I told her Yes, me Lady. "I've long been wanting to give you a small present for the way you does for

me," she says, adding, "at table. Here," she says, and slips it into my hand. It was the largest I'd got so far, and I gives a blink, and counts again, and finds it is even so. "Well," I thinks, "here's cumsha and corruption, and all the worst. Ten shiny-minted King George's for catching a lady in the flagrant. There's money in it," I tells myself, "and ease and pleasure too."

'I was to find there was likely something else, and not so good neither. Captain Gunther he used to sit at table with one hand flat on the cloth, unless occupied otherwise; and the next day I reaches over this hand to place a dish of pea soup before him. He moves the hand up accidental-like, and sends the soup spilling on the table; I felt — I don't know why — it was done a purpose. I mops up, and fetches a clean napkin to cover the spot, and while I'm doing so, I catches the boy officer and the lady reading each other's faces in a cold sort of withdrawn manner.

'That afternoon Captain Gunther finds me outside a cabin, and nobody else near. He walks up looking straight and severe in me eyes. "I've got something for you, you

gawpus, as'll larn you to keep your mouth close," he says; and with that he fetches me a sockdologer that lays me flat. I never saw what spilling soup got to do with silence. I thought at first I was dead, but soon picks meself up and carries on as usual. Philosophic you've got to be in ships. At breakfast next day I overhears a cutting mamma say to her little girl: "Our boy-waiter's been looking for the key of the starboard watch, and found something else." All the passengers gets sort of nautical.

'You'd think that'd be enough. But no — there's more, and worse. The bosun, a big vigorous man, always in a red-striped jersey, and the pigtail remarkable for size and gloss, and the japanned hat cock-billed, comes into the forecastle, and lifts a finger at me. "And is it you, me pretty sailor-lad, and no other?" he says; and goes on: "Now, don't stand there like a billy goat in stays. You're for a round dozen, me boy, and got to keep mute's a fish as to wherefores and whys too. A wink to the wise, Tommy, that's what it is." I tells him I ain't done nothing; whereupon he kinda chants:

"It's all the same to me, me lad, whatever you've gone and done:
It's all tangle Double Dutch, and coiled against the sun;
I got to bare the good right arm and let the rope's end drive;
And you have got to take the same, as sure as you're alive."

Well, they kicks out the lascars, who must never see a white man flogged, and strips me of me shirt, and the bosun gives me the lambasting — thirteen strokes with a tarry rope. Mild for the sea, mind you. Often they cuts a man to the spine with the scourges, and sometimes he's a cripple for life. I was able to run with the pillaws — that's fowls or junk, but always rice — and wait table same day.

'I didn't bear the lady no malice, or not much. She'd got to keep her fair name unspotted, same's anyone else, and not have it blown upon by a steward, whom she might remind to stay dumb. Only I can't hook me dinghy to anything she could have told the captain. That's the mystery. And

that mystery was to land me in a foreign port, and start what I've got to tell, more's the pity — more's the pity.'

Lucy kissed him; and Thomas Pidgeon seemed to reject a far abstraction, and then proceeded:

'Well, after that, sometimes there's a clock calm, as they calls it — sea all glassy and quiet — and not a cloth stirring aloft, and all hands whistling for a breeze. It comes, and keeps steady; and by and by, here's Madagascar far off, where the dodos comes from; and then we fetches Mauritius and Rodriguez. From there — except for some heights of which I knows nothing, prickling on the horizon — no landfalls as far's Ceylon. It was all faint colours and mountains at first. We raises Dondra Head, and coasts East — it was scorching hot these parts — rounds Foul Point, and there's Trincomalee. Yes, and there begins all me bitter hard luck.

'This place Trinco, it's built in the neck of a fine great jutting point that cuts the large bay almost in two. There was a round island called Round Island; and a lagoon

called Tumblergum, or something of that, with sailing craft, and pearl-divers going down to fill the oyster-nets — all fine, and bright, and foreign. We lies by a handsome wharf in Inner Harbour. There was ships of all sorts near by, and gulls flocking each. And it was very hot.

'Funny thing: I don't know who Trinco belongs to, but I'm dead sure it wasn't us. Portugals comes aboard, and some John Crappoes, and several Yah-for-Yes folk, besides the English and natives. Looks like it don't matter who's fighting who when trade's about. The coast was lovely with big rocks, and creepers, and coloured forests, and once — only once — I gets a sort of fainting whiff of spice. But the prettiness don't apply to Trincomalee. Trinco weren't so taking. Bit on the mean side, with hovels and that, although the streets wide and fine between. Elephants, true; and carts drawn by little white bullocks; and them funny rickshaws also; and hawks sailing in the blue; and some pretty birds in the trees; but a disappointment, somehow, after I'd come so far. Colombo and Kandy, and them parts, they

was better maybe; but here I got to stay. And no exploring neither. I didn't like it.'

Cluny Stanyhurst snuffed the candles, while the sailor continued the story. Lucy was still closely side by side with the young ship's steward; the soft and beautiful dress still against the worn blue coat; the strange tableau preserved.

'The *Comorin* was bound to Madras,' Thomas Pidgeon resumed, 'but not me. Destiny, I lay, that I should now be left there, in Trincomalee — or Fate, or whatever it might be called; and all the tragedy ever was, and the sorrow, to fall down and humble me.'

The priest made a small movement — a silent warning — to indicate to the girl the necessity for a tranquil pose at this juncture. Lucy, looking the Abbé in the eyes, smiled tenderly, and was quiet. Stanyhurst sat with the legs stretched, the face still, the meditative upward gaze immovable. He might have been made of stone. Not a person in that London room but was far away in mind;

each an English lad in an island port in Indian seas, and waiting on what might befall.

'The *Comorin* leaves harbour, then, and never carries me in her,' the steward went on; 'and for why? I'll tell you what I believes. Madras, you see. That's where the lady, and her husband, and the boy swaddy was bound; and that's where the ship, maybe, was to lie for a week or fortnight. Well, a steward that knows summat in the sly line, and wants money, say, and there's a high-up lady can be whispered same, eh? You see what I mean? Be it so or not, Captain Gunther indicates he don't want me services no more.

' "No complaint, mind—just an idea," he says, "and I'll give you good discharge papers, too. Very obedient and discreet, I'll write — discreet, see? never blabs, that means — as'll get you another berth whenever tired of port. There's plenty to amuse a lad in Trincomalee — plenty — and you've got your whack of pay all intact, and a nice sum, too. A young spark of leisure. Well,

Pidgeon," he says, holding out the hand once knocked me silly, "good-bye and good luck. Discreet, mind; that's what I've put in the discharge. Trusted to keep the lips tight, and'll never peach. Don't forget." He dusts the words he has just written on the discharge sheet, reads 'em through, and then gives me the parchment.

'Thus it was; and there was I ashore in Trinco, and in a sense flush. Good wages drawn, mind you, and much better tips, all packed in me money-belt, with a sheath-knife hanging ready by same. Nothing to worry about, only I don't want to be there, a stranger, you could say, in a far land. I don't want to be idle neither. That leads to loafing, and crawling the drink-shops, and continual three sheets in the wind — half drunk — and sometimes climbing the rigging — getting rough — and knives going. And then, perhaps, the money all out, and the *ghaut serang* — the crimp, that is — asking you inside. *Doasta* he gives you, and you falls under the drink like you's been clubbed, and only wakes up in the forecastle of an

outward-bounder. Not for me. I knows the game.

'I sees the *Comorin* sail. She departs with the canvas set up beautiful like towers, and fiddles going gay, and cheers, and gulls crying about her, and I was sad. The sun's upon her, and she looks that noble going out, the great ship, all strength and beauty and, to me, all melancholy, too. I was happy, most times, in that *Comorin*.

'But no regrets, thinks I; regrets is foolish and forbidden, I thinks then; and I've often thought the same since; if a man could kill regrets, I says to myself, he'd be like them people — fakeers, they're called — in the East, who stays complete and unblinking, no matter whether it's death or delight's in the offing and making their way. Peace, no less, where there's no regrets. Peace — it's the loveliest word. But it wasn't for me, no, nor won't be this side Jordan.'

'Sorrow,' the priest said, 'sorrow, deep sorrow; there's peace there, my son. Sorrow is, believe me, the only peace. *Paradoxe — c'est vérité.* We cannot, my son, know peace except through sorrow.'

'It is true, Father,' the young sailor, in a low voice, said.

'Go on, my son.'

But the sailor was silent; and the room was silent; and the clock, after a musical little chime, struck one. The rain fell. Cluny Stanyhurst got up and snuffed the candles. And some he renewed.

'It's late — it's one o'clock,' the sailor said.

No one stirred. And the Abbé repeated: 'Go on, my son. No hurry.'

The sailor once more took up the story. Lucy, against the young steward's side, sat very still. The tableau was restored.

'It was all bright heat when I goes ashore with me traps,' Thomas Pidgeon proceeded; 'a sort of glare that makes colours too vivid like; and dust-motes skipping, so to speak, in sparkles and capers, before your eyes. Foreign, I thinks; here it is like you wanted to see, Tommy, when you looks at big ships making or leaving London River, and shanties at the capstan, and Chinks and Zamboes, and all. Crates of fruits, and a tiger in a cage, and parrots all gaudy, and

monkeys; there they was, on Thames wharfs, to remind you of strange ports abroad; flowers, and palms, and sun; and now here you are, and where's the joys? Well, it was some fun, too, in spite of things not so lively as expected. And being the dry season, no rains to interfere neither.

'Me stiff, japanned sailor hat, it was all I had against a sun might take you in the neck and stretch you flat; and by and by I enters a store — crazy sort of hutch, too — and accrues a wideawake like I sees about. Da Silva's, a Portugal's, was the shop. "Sabby English, monseer?" I asks. "Goddam, ya," he answers. I finds out from him where there's a sort of tavern kept by a Mynheer — I disremember the name — that'll give me a bed, and there I leaves me traps, and takes a walk among whites and natives, and scavenger crows everywhere.

'Presently, an old Zingalese, in a turban and white rags, he shuffles up, and says: "Cobra." I looks at the round basket on his head, and gives him the smallest coin in me pocket; whereupon he puts the basket down, and squats alongside, and plays on a

pipe had a bulge in it; and presently, out of the hole in the top of the basket, here comes the head of a cobra, swaying in a weary manner, and then more drawn up, and the reptile, half the body standing erect, spreads a hood with a pair of great spectacles marked on same, and swings to and fro in tune with the playing. No one takes any notice except me and a small naked boy. Little bullocks, with a yoke on the hump, is drawing carts, and once a great dusty elephant, swaying the trunk, comes along. A rickshaw stops for a moment, and then a fat, yellow-faced white man on the seat, he gives a order, and the boy in the shafts he sets off at a trot.

'The white women, fraws — them's Dutch — and Portugals, and misses, they've lost their colour, except they're painted. The sun's fair ravening, these parts. All the native women seems to be kept indoors; one pretty one in silks I sees, but the exception. Beauty — and there's plenty of it, too — don't go abroad on the streets; I wished it did. Fine, slim, upstanding wenches, big eyes and white teeth, like the Begum called me Kalishee. The natives, they wear white shirts,

and their hair done on top and fixed with a tortoise comb; beggars — the blind and such — with mugs to receive alms, they sits in the dust; and sometimes you sees a shaven head in a yellow robe; that's a priest. I went into a Dutch-style brick house — there weren't more'n one or two — and changed some money into the coins used in these parts; ruppees, you see.

'Well, in this place Trinco, I don't want to let on I'm rich, not in a sailor's tavern; so I asks Mynheer can he give me a job. Mynheer's no end pleased. He puts me behind the bar, and very glad of the chance too. The Hollander, there and then, he supplies a grand meal; curry and shrimps, a kind of pheasant, very good, and little bananas, very sweet. In honour of my arrival it was.

'I liked it there too; the talk with deep-sea sailormen, and that. I serves a drink called shrab, and another called fogram — cheap and poor — and scooch, which is spirits. It was unusual orderly in Mynheer's; very few fights, and never no bloodshed except from the nose. Not a knife drawn, far as I sees,

all the time I'm there. And no little Judys allowed.

'Most days, I was early abroad, walking, and watching ships loading and unloading, sometimes ox-carts, and sometimes elephants, to fetch and carry; and then I'd return to breakfast and me duties.

'But I fell ill. A sort of fever that began to pull down all me energy. I don't know what it was, but something pretty usual in Trinco; among the whites, I mean. Dry and burning, and sometimes shivering. I'd had a bad spell of same — icy sweats too — one night, and thought, as I went out next morning, it'd be all dickey with me if I didn't get away. I walks up a bit of a hillside, and sits down, very weary, by a kind of ruins. A tank, with a little water and green scum, and a big crane bird on the edge, and small flycatchers going about. Bright and fine here, but morning fog over the sea. I felt so mournful I could have cried. And it weren't just fever and weakness neither; but something black, and foreboding, and sad, like heaviness and a kind of sorrow without end. Every aching misery

ever was, come and brooded. And what happened was a warning; and I knew it; I felt it like a weight, and that the doom must occur whether or not. Grief like a pall was over everything; and I was afraid.

'She comes along in the mist like something fatal, a wraith, and worse; for a wisp of fog cuts off her keel like, and a sort of white cloud lies upon her masts and spars, and the canvas is dim and lost like, but the bulk of her moving solemn. Quite close to me a kind of wailing voice says, "Dekko". There's a thin native in a loin-cloth standing by the tank. I asks him what's the trouble; and he says, his eyes on the ship, "Coffin". That was what it was, a coffin coming slow and silent; I see that at once. I couldn't think, before, what she had put me in mind of, but then I knew.

'The mist thins, and soon it's gone and all clear; and behold a noble ship like a great citadel. The native still stares at her, and don't say nothing when I asks if he knows her name.

'It's the *Blanchefleur*' — the sailor mispronounced the word — 'one of John Company's

Indiamen, and the best ever left dock, that I watches that morning making harbour. Affliction is still upon me, but now not so deep. For I begins to think here's a ship in which, likely, I'll be able to get a billet. Berth as steward was what I wanted. Not deck hand. And with me papers from the *Comorin*, and experience and that, it was fair easy.

'No one more blithe than me, when I goes up the ladder, with me dunnage, and deposits same in the forecastle. It was like coming home, and I foresees the voyage as a thing done, and me walking into Old Harry Windle's, and telling how I'd been twice all round the globe. The fever began to leave me almost at once. Yes, I was happy, and at the same time sad. I didn't know why, but sometimes, all of a sudden, the gloom would come down upon me heart. It was frightening and lonely like, but there it was, a kind of shadow on the soul. And while it was there I was in fear.

'Captain Calthorp of the *Blanchefleur*, he

had a hard seaman's face, but the voice soft, unless when giving orders, and the manners somehow gentle. There was something both stern and kind about the Captain. I can't describe it no better than that. The eyes was very blue, and very steady-looking, and the lips close-set. All the passengers, and the crew too, was fond of him. But I'll tell you something. He weren't too easy in the mind, no, nor some of the officers of the *Blanchefleur* weren't neither. It's hard to say how I knew, but knew I did, and certain. Sometimes an odd kind of sense would come over me, as if the anxiety of these officers was touching me like it was them. A sort of courage, mingled with trouble, if you can understand, was in their hearts. That's what I thought. It was a feeling in the air, somehow. They would look dumb questions at each other, and was grave, and never so hearty and laughing as you'll often find such. It was unusual and it was queer too.

'Most of the passengers, while the *Blanchefleur's* lying at Trincomalee, was ashore, a change after the days aboard, I suppose, for them as hails from India. Some came off to

sleep, and some not. There's no good hotels in Trinco — I don't see one. So I never got to know the passengers — not really — till we was at sea. And something a bit in the fantastic way, if that's the word, was to happen. before then.

'This is how it was. One evening I'm ordered to carry a basket of champagne along to the Captain's cabin. Captain Calthrop's there with his officers, and the glasses on the table. Each takes a full glass in the right hand, and lifts up the left. Captain Calthrop says kind of solemn: "The *Blanchefleur* and her cargo," and all the other officers repeats the words, and drinks to the last drop, and then casts the glasses smashing on the deck. I was fair startled, but not an officer anything but very quiet. "Clear up the splinters, Pidgeon, please," Captain Calthrop says sort of serious, "and fetch along more glasses." This I did. The wine was all drunk, but no more broken glasses.

'When I next sees the officers, most of them is shore-going, and with long pistols too. They don't talk much, but a kind of set look about their faces, like as if all's deter-

mined beforehand, and nothing more to say. The stars, as nearly always, they was wonderful that night, and everything — ships in harbour, and wharfs, and houses ashore — all plain to be seen. Melancholy, in that beautiful hour, fell and covered me like a shroud. That's all I can say. The black mood, it was, and a terror too. I felt the tears come running down. I stayed there, by the bulwarks, and then I sees the sailors rigging tackle, although it's night, and nothing, as far as I could know, to come aboard. We was to sail next morning, at sunrise. There was a few passengers about, but at last, and by degrees, none; and the night drew on, and the ship was all quiet.

'And in this quiet I hears the wailing sort of chant to which native labourers moves under a heavy load that wants many hands. In the stillness of night it was a homeless kind of sound, cheerless and wretched, and like there was a funeral coming. And as the party and their load comes into view, in bright starlight, approaching the wharf, I went cold. The burden was on a trestle and poles, borne by a great party of natives, the

officers with their pistols, and some of the ship's hands with bare cutlasses, moving alongside. But what made me give a shudder was the idea that what was being carried was just a great coffin; it looked same as that, shape and all, and took me like a chill. The hands that had been running tackle to hoist the thing aboard, they was now silent and staring — no oaths nor nothing. That dismal kind of lament the bearers was lifting, it kept getting a little louder as they came, and presently, and mixing with it, you could hear the sound of exhausted grunts — so it appears — these labourers makes when things is toilsome.

'I was so unhappy, I never hears Captain Calthrop come up; and his voice close by my ear gives me something of a shock. "Well, Pidgeon," he says, "admiring the night, eh?" His tone was sort of cold, and he holds the butt of a pistol in one hand, and caresses the long muzzle with the other. "Better be off to the hammock, my lad," he goes on; "there's hot cocoa, and what not, to be carried before daybreak to officers on duty. We sail at dawn."

' "Good night, sir," I says, moving off.

'When I was in the hammock, I felt a little better, and fell asleep, without dreams, until just before daybreak, when I must rouse and go on duty. But I never forgot about the thing was fetched aboard, and guarded so careful. It kept coming into my mind; and once I gets a bit of the high-strikes, and thinks perhaps what it was. The body of Adam, I tells myself, found on the Peak — they've got his footmark there to prove he once fetched Ceylon — and carried along all reverent to be laid in Paul's, and not among heathens. "I'll get hold o' one of them Jackies was marching with the corpse," I informs myself, "and find out if 'tis so." Music was going, and the *Blanchefleur* under sail, the ensign flying proud, and all sweet and orderly, after hurrahs, and putting to sea, and that, before I could do same.

' "Wasn't you with that load come along late last night?" I asks a horn-fist.

'He tells me yes and what of it? I winks crafty, and he says: "Anan? Well, something rich carried out of India and stored secret," he says; "but who's to tell? Only the officers

with their demihays primed and cocked to coerce the blacks, I lay. They knows, likely, but not us. We was left ready with cutlasses out, in one place; and then, after some time, they joins us with the freight. Some sort of treasure, I reckon. John Company, they gets agents to find out about such; and then permits the mogul, or rajah, or whatever, to go on with the tortures and pleasures, and do the high hand, and luxury and what you might call practices, on condition the Company takes the fancy boodle. Why, I'm told, they'll likely allow soldiers out of Turkey, or China, or Persia, or Tartary, to overrun a palace o' purpose. For, lookee, now, sonny, what it means, that. A pretence, you see, that robbers has looted the Throne Room. It's a game," he says; "and now where's me cumsha?" I gives him something in way of reward; I forget what. The horn-fist, he was called Bobby — no other name, far as I ever hears.

'And it was soon after that, the little lass comes up to me.'

The sailor slowly bowed the head and was silent. And in this silence four hearts were

possibly touched to secret communion and the sense of tragedy. It was in a lower, and somehow hushed, voice that the steward took up the story.

'She was like you,' he said, turning to Lucy and looking gravely into the girl's face; 'I knew it, soon's I come into the room, and it staggered me too. But she was younger; not so much as thirteen, I daresay — the loveliest child. She was dressed in soft cottons out of India, but very fashionable like, and she would scream, pretty and happy, when the breeze took charge and all fluttering. O Christ.'

A little silence, and no one moving.

'She was with a mamma, but no daddy. He was dead in India,' the sailor resumed, 'and had been an officer — a major, I think — and in battles; but whether he was killed fighting, or just died, I don't know which. Well, the lass comes smiling and beautiful to where I stands, and looks into my face with lovely gay eyes, and me heart turns over with love and admiration.

' "Hallo, Tommy Pidgeon," she says, "I

know your name, but I bets you don't know mine."

'"Yes, I do too," I says.

'She makes a sort of little mouth at me. "No you don't," she says; "what is it, then?"

'"It's Lucy," I says.

'She laughs like clear ripples and music. "Well," she says, making the eyes larger, "that's clever, because daddy wanted me called Lucy, but I wasn't. What's the name of this big ship?" she asks me.

'I pretended I couldn't remember, not while she stands there so sweet, and a sort of question in the look, because, you see, I wanted to keep her like that for ever. At last I tells her the ship's real name, after running through them belonging to others.

'"And it's my name too,' she says — and a little grave in her manner she was just then. "Blanchefleur, I'm called," she says, and laughs, all gaiety once more. "That's the name mamma chose while I was a baby in a cradle, Tommy, and it's because I'm same's a sweet lily, see? Only," she adds, "you can call me Lucy too, because I like

that just as well," she says. "Can you make ships?" she inquires.

'I told her none better. I told her I'd been making fine painted model ships for little girls ever since I was six. I told her I'd got one on the way that I'd promised myself I'd give to the first little girl called me Tommy Pidgeon. And as that was herself, she could see she was lucky. Well, at this, she looks all round at the military officers and ladies, and other passengers — some little girls there too, but none enchanting like herself — and she says: "I'd like to give you a kiss, Tommy," she says, "but I can't; not so soon. However," she says, "you'll know I wanted to, because I've told you."

'Her mamma — she was pretty, but sick, and always lying in a long chair when on deck — calls her, and she stands on tiptoe, all swaying, and says to me: "A ship for Lucy, Tommy, soon's you can," and then comes down on her shoes, and goes running, all grace and joy.

'Well, I turns to the old duties once more, but greater relish, somehow, and not so

much on account of homeward bound as along of Miss Lucy. It was full happiness to be in the same ship with that little girl — pure delight all the time it was. My sweet lass was pale, but not sallow like some other of the little girls. All the gentlemen and ladies was slightly on the yellow side, some more, some less, and one or two improved by being so. An old Colonel, for instance, lean and tall, he couldn't have looked half so handsome but for that, I thinks. His name was Marrott, and all his friends called him Mossy Face, and he liked it.

'Thirty-five passengers I can recall easy; there may have been more. Officials they was mostly — beaks, and grabby officers, and wives and children — and nearly all with Indian servants too. The table was lavish, but with foreign mungy and salt junk more frequent than in the *Comorin*, only the lush just the same and flowing. While I was serving table I kept as close as I could to my little girl. And afterwards too. Only to hear her voice talking to others was sweet to me.

'The ship's company was about eighty

souls. That is, without lascars. There was considerable more of these than in the *Comorin*. We had some foreigners among the hands; two Italians and a Spaniard, I remember; he was called Josey, and both the Italians Antonio; I don't know the real names. There was a Portugal too. But I wasn't interested, really, in anyone aboard except my little Miss Lucy. And the ship even, I thought, it was only of value — only of value — because it carried that little girl and was named like her too.

'The *Blanchefleur*, she was on the model of the *Comorin*, but of greater burden, and the finest, I hear tell, of the East Indiamen. I could believe it too. She was grand. The life aboard was much like in the *Comorin*, and a music also. I wished I could have had a wood copy of the whole ship, and everyone in her as well, to give to that little girl. I done the best I could. And I'll tell you how. It was real cunning, I lay.

'For I goes to the carpenter's lad, an apprentice, or what not, and I says: "Lookee here, Chips, me lad" — and I shows him a

gold piece — "you find time to make a model copy o' the *Blanchefleur*, ports and masts and head-piece and all, and sails too, and it's yours," I says, "and it's new and bright and all the best. A bit o' paint, see? And a lick o' scrimshaw to make pretty-pretty. Hear it ring," I says, jumping the piece on the bench. That's what I done, and effective no end. He begins selecting woods there and then.

'Miss Lucy, she turns her head, and looks up at me sideways while I'm serving at table, and her eyes smiling, and serious too. "Coming on grand," I whispers, "and life-like also." And so I tells her for maybe two — three days, and then, "Just a day to let the paint dry, Miss Lucy," I says. She looks all round the table with a sort of shy smile, like she was taking every one in her confidence she's got a secret, but won't tell. Soon's the meal's over I skips along to me lad. "Now, Chips," I said, "a extra silver crown for making a little doll, very wee, as'll stand on deck — little woman, see, if you can manage same; and a white dress with blue spots, see?" The lad, he done so.

'So there I had me fine ship, bright with colours, and scrimshaws, and a little toy lady to be placed here and there, and all smart and fine. There was a wood cradle made wavy and blue, supposed to be water like — and the model to stand in same. Well, I thinks, how to give the little lass this fine plaything? Here is how I did. I sets it up in her place at table, so's she'll see it when she comes to breakfast.'

The room was silent, and the young sailor silently weeping. Presently he blinked away the tears, and was calm as he resumed:

'She comes into the saloon after most is sat down — and all been admiring the model ship too — and stands still a moment like she can't believe it, and then runs and sits down and puts her bare pretty arms round the toy, but without touching, and weeps for delight. I only hears her say "Oh! — oh!" and then I goes away to have a private cry by myself.

'When I comes back, all's joy, the little lass chattering and laughing, and not eating nothing, and all the passengers as was nearby expressing approval of the fine ship she's got. "Oh, Tommy!" she says when she sees me,

"oh, Tommy! — oh, Tommy!" "Now look here, Miss Lucy," I says, stern and severe, "you take and eat up that plateful, or you'll have that grand ship stole away and never brought back, see." "Oh, anything, Tommy, anything!" she says, happy as you please, and jumping where she sat, and clapping her little hands. But she never ate much.

'Miss Lucy's sick mother, she was full of esteem likewise. It was her mamma done me the greatest favour anyone ever did. For she crooks her finger at me beckoning, and leads me to the cabin where herself and little girl has their berths, and there's Miss Lucy, happy and shy, and stands on her toes, and puts her arms round me neck, and gives me two kisses, close and sweet and fragrant, one under each eye. "Now kiss Miss Blanche-fleur's cheek, Mr. Pidgeon," mamma says smiling. And this I done, very gentle.'

The clock, after a musical little chime, struck two.

'It's late,' the steward said.

'Go on, my son,' the Abbé requested in a gentle voice.

Thomas Pidgeon continued:

'There was a burning-glass I had, took out of a telescope as was damaged, and I used to show Miss Lucy how you could let the sun shine through same, and set chips alight; and we played — when there was no duty for a bit — at being cast on a desert shore — just my little lass and me — and making a fire to cook a bear, and all the tender parts for herself. "That's a juicy bit," I would say, pretending. I always carried that glass in me pocket, just for the opportunity, and to continue the yarn we was making up about that wild place and them savages. The little lass would say to me: "Got our fairy glass all safe, Tommy? Don't lose it, or we won't have nothing to light a fire. You was gathering wood last time, before you went away. Can you tell Lucy now?" Sometimes I could, sometimes not. Once Captain Calthrop says to me at breakfast: "Take a slack morning, Pidgeon. I've spoke to cook." I wondered if my wee lass had give him a kiss. The yarn went fine this same morning. That model ship was alongside, just to pretend that was the wreck we'd escaped from.' The young sailor looked a little

wildly about the room, before beginning to speak again.

'The black mood sometimes — before I could fight it away — would come down, sudden, and dreadful, and no reason. Yes, even while I was talking gay about adventures on a strange beach. And Miss Lucy, like she was aware of same, would turn and look at me very mournful, and once her eyes full of tears. Ah, me — ah, me. I didn't know the end of that yarn we was inventing. Not then. It wasn't never finished in the *Blanchefleur*. "More next time, eh?" we used to tell each other, the little lass and me, in the *Blanchefleur*. It went on and on, and then it come to an end. But not in that ship. Real life continued that tale, and not in the *Blanchefleur* neither. Not in the ship. It was all decreed — it was all decreed. And unless it was God Almighty, I don't know what or why or how it was.'

The steady descent of rain was to be heard. Lucy, with rapt eyes, sighed, and her fingers moved upon the sailor's hand lying in her lap. Host and priest sat unmoving, until

:he former rose to snuff the candles. And in ɔne or two sockets he set up new tapers.

'My little Lucy,' the sailor resumed, 'was a happy sailor, and smiled brave and good even when, like a bit at first, the sickness took her. She'd do the nautical very pretty — slang like sailors uses, and pretending to hitch the pants, and making believe to spit, and say an oath or two — and whenever she done this, I wanted to squeeze her to death in joy and love. Lucy was all serene after the first day or two, and no storm can't make her suffer.

'There was storm, too. It was all heavy weather — after the good days before — while we draws towards Cape Good Hope, and then a snorter of a gale comes rushing, and grows and grows. Screeching wind, and big greybacks running, and the ship rolling and speeding, though sail reduced. It's the gurges and currents hereabouts — powerful wicked and treacherous they are — was taking charge of the *Blanchefleur*, and bringing her on and on towards destruction. No one didn't know though — not then.

But afterwards, from what I gathers, it must have been so. I learns no proper observations can't be took in that dark storm, only it was certain — I mean it was believed — we was nigh a hundred leagues from any land in Africa. I overhears Captain Calthrop telling Colonel Marrott such, and then I observes the Captain smiling round at the faces near him at table. "Nothing to cause the smallest anxiety," he says. He was wrong.

'The storm don't abate, and the wind strikes harp music, singular and wild, and sometimes a sort of tune there's no making out, but there, and fearful, in the cordage. To myself, that is. Me mind began to get sort of confused, and at times — at times — the dark humour, and a sickness of soul, and sorrow like all dissolving, upon me. And so time goes by, with all canvas reduced except fore-sail and mizen-staysail. An hour or so after such, I suppose, but don't know, a number of hands is ordered aloft to unship the fore-top-gallant mast. It's sent down, and the party's again on deck, when I hears a hand cry out: "Where's an officer?" One of the mates, Mr. Dockett, comes up; and

then this man that cried out, and another, says, shouting because of the wind: "Breakers and land, sir." The mate shakes the head, and calls: "Not possible". But the party is deadly sure, I discovers such by their eyes, and the look on their faces, sort of awful and strained. And one hand turns to me, and says, close in my ear: "Rocks, and it's gospel truth."

'I never waits; I feel it's so, Mr. Dockett or no Mr. Dockett; and I runs to the Captain's cabin, and says: "Hands from aloft reports land, sir." I see a sort of look come in his face like doom's there, but he only nods, and snatches up a speaking trumpet, and goes hurrying out.

'There's orders to wear ship; the helm is put hard-a-weather; mizen-staysail hauled down; fore-topsail and jib loosed; and after-yards squared. The *Blanchefleur*, she was bringing round all right, when there was a powerful shock, like nothing you can describe, but wrenching the heart. Then comes a grinding and smashing, above the turmoil of seas and wind, and the ship jumping and trembling, and all the while she's declining her forepart, like saluting death.

'Her stern was jambed fast, bolted in rocks, and so she lies on a sunk reef, pounding fit to tear herself in two, and the storm going by, shrill, and kind of exulting, and there's gloom, and a flying spume, and racing cloud.

'I can't never forget that time. The land, seems it's quite plain, sometimes, in spite of dashing scud and the surf spouting; and it's unfriendly and callous too, looks like. All the surges of Indian Ocean appears like roaring and whelming down upon the *Blanchefleur*, and that piece of coast; and all the voices of air shouting something you can't understand, and the noise a thing to stun you. Now and then, here and there, the teeth of rocks would show vicious among the breakers. That place was made like that o' purpose since creation, so's if the ship weren't caught one part, here's a slaver and jaws to tear her another. My head's all giddy when I remember. All lashing wind, and water, and wreck.

'I looks among the passengers on this deck and that — some was panic-struck, seems, and some brave, and some like just dazed; and every time there's a crash and shudder

in the frame of the *Blanchefleur*, you'd hear screams — but I don't care what happens to anyone so long's my Lucy's comforted. "Lucy, Lucy," I kind of croons, as I goes about searching.

'And when I finds her, she clings to me silent, and then I knows the little soul is the bravest ever was, and a soldier's daughter, and her mother a soldier's wife too, with a drawn and pretty face, like suffering, but all calm. "It's just what we was making up in the first part of the story," the lass says in my ear. "So it is too," I says, speaking close, and the curls soft like silk at me lips, "and presently we'll come ashore for the adventures." But she seems kind of serious about that, for when she says, "Oh, yes, Tommy," there's a sort of far-off thing like mourning in her voice.

'I stayed a long time by Lucy and her mother. I couldn't leave my little girl. And when, at last, I done so, it was because of an idea took me. You can't believe what it was. It was to fetch along the model of the *Blanchefleur* I'd given Lucy, and carry it to her hands,

and be kind of gay about how we must take our fine toy ashore. My little one smiles, but never said nothing, when I went away.

'I don't know how to tell about what happens now. I don't seem really to know if it's true. It's true to me, yet all strange also — like sometimes you remembers a dream, bits sticking out plain, and bits blurred, and then the whole vision in a flash, and vanished again.

'I knows the ship through and through; but here, presently, all goes queer, and unfamiliar like. Because of the jolting, and crashings, and queer angles like, I dare-say, although I'd been about her in storm before. I could have taken the Bible oath I was going right, and yet, if you can follow, I knows very well this ain't the direction, and yet it is too. Like a sort of dizzy guidance, and something telling secret to keep on, and feet going sure, but confusion also. Sometimes all dark it was, and sometimes a lantern, and sometimes daylight very dim, I don't know from where, and not a human to be seen; but like there was presences too, and watching. Down a ladder, and a

rocking passage, and another ladder. Like a dream, as I says. And so on, me groping and fair mystified.

'Then, somehow, here's a smashed bulkhead, and a sort of well, and shadow, yet a glow too, very strange, and something flashing splendid. A great crate, or case, or some such thing, was all broke and torn open; and water going to and back; and there, lifting, and falling, and dragging in the wash, was a part — only a part of — some enormous glory. I'm still like in a dream, and looks astonished upon what I sees, and knows it's there, and yet can't believe same. I can't, not now even. It seemed to make its own light in that place. And it weren't so much yellows, and purples, and greens, and scarlets, and such, you understand. It was like them colours gone enchanted, and wild, and fallen from another world. Gold and silver net it was, seems, and all scraping and slithering like the skin of a fabulous serpent was in the water, and designs wrought in the mesh like some whopping great sampler done in precious jewels, and pearls, and stones all priceless. "Holy Jesus," I

thinks, "what's this, except it's the Cham of Arabia's magic carpet?"

'I seemed to go crazy, and I wanted to laugh, and I wanted to cry too. And then, here comes a lurch, and the splendour moving towards me like it was alive, and myself fighting shadows, you might say, and running, and going up ladders to get away, and through passages, just as if in a maze.

'I'm all astonished when I finds myself again beside my Lucy. Why, I thinks, I must have gone in a faint, or something, and had a chimera. I couldn't believe I'd seen that thing. I couldn't believe it. It was too mad like. But I was panting exhausted, and all confused. Something had happened — but what? I didn't know.

'Just as I got beside my little lass again — Lucy gives me her hand, very serious and pretty — I learns we's going to fire distress signals. That's the heavy guns, discharged at intervals of a minute. But it never happened. The gunner reports the powder magazine drowned in water, and nothing to be done — nobody can't get at the barrels. After that

some time, the main-mast is cut away, and then the fore-mast, and fearful crashes as they come down, and a tangle of gear; but all of no avail. The ship still quaking and heaving, and fast in the reef. I only hears about this dreadful coast, with the whirlpools, and cruel rocks, and murderous seas never still, long afterwards. The place by which the great vessel was grinding and breaking, it's called Zaambas. All knew very soon there's no hope of floating the *Blanchefleur* off the crags, and away from the breakers was destroying her. It was morning; perhaps noon; not later.

'A yawl was got away, and the jolly-boat, and both broke in pieces in the seas, and the crews drowned. Then a raft was made, and secured by an iron hawser that presently snaps like it was a thread, and all perished. After this the two Antonios, those brave men, and a lascar, not less so, they tries to get a life-line ashore by swimming. One Antonio is drowned, but the other, and the lascar, they fights through the surf and comes on the beach. The coast's not more than two or

three hundred yards from the wreck, I believes.

'This time was all distressful for a little girl, and I didn't like Lucy should know about sailors drowned, and that. The other boys and girls, they was crouched by their parents, and sobbing and screaming sore. But my wee lass brave as could be, and her mother too. I says: "What d'you think I sees, Miss Lucy, just now?" And I tells her a lie. I says: "Our fine model ship, I went to fetch her," I says, "but all I do, I sees her, sails brave and set, floating through the port and voyaging away. That means all's well. Like your ship's gone to find help, you see. And her little lady — that's you, and commanding also — standing firm on deck."

' "Oh, yes, Tommy, I know," says the little girl. "Lucy is going away and away. But you mustn't mind, Tommy. Oh, what's Lucy saying? — what's Lucy saying?" She looks at me strange, the eyes empty and wide; and then she's tender and mournful, and gives me her hand.

'While I was there, the Antonio and the

lascar, and a crowd of natives on the beach, they gets a hawser ashore, and secures it fast to a rock, and the hands begin to swarm down same. Most was drowned, but some goes safe. And while this was happening, and with a rending of timbers like explosions, the *Blanchefleur* went in two, like you'd crack a stick, and the bows comes veering round, lying athwart the stern. All as was left they was scrambled on to the poop, and myself, with Lucy and her mother, and other passengers. The wind's driving dead ashore, and now lifting seas that's smashing all. And although you'd think that was the end, yet it was the saving of a great many, if you could call it saving, being cast on shore, in a wild place, among savages, and fierce animals, and no help anywhere.

'The starboard quarter, on which we was collected, it's broke away and sent drifting, while most of the wreck still wedged firm in rocks. It's like we was on a raft, floating towards shore, seas sometimes breaking over, but a great hope too. And presently we's in shoal water. All those on this part of the wreck was saved. I carries Lucy ashore in

my arms, and cries out to God for joy and gratitude, when she's with her mother and the rest of the women and children about the fires had been lighted.'

Lucy lifted the young sailor's hand from her lap to her bosom and pressed it there. Stanyhurst stirred, and turned the face towards the sailor, with a movement as of one about to speak — to ask questions — and then resumed the former attitude. The priest sat still. The room seemed isolated in a night of pouring rain.

The young steward said: 'All my things is soaked through and through with salt water, like everyone's there. The burning-glass is in me pocket, and the money belt about me; that's all's left to me. But what do I care? I walks about in a state of pride and amazement, and every time I looks where the fires are burning, and knows my Lucy secure, a wave of joy and tears goes over me. I was happy — I was happy. And after a bit, I went to collect wreckage with the others.

'There was two or three hogs living, and some washed up dead; geese and fowls, some

crates full, and a few alive; a cask of pork and one barrel of flour; a wine butt and three puncheons of rum. It wouldn't go far, not all we'd got, among more'n a hundred souls saved alive; not many days it wouldn't last.

'There was a row, I recalls, that evening, and one of the sailors had an eye gouged out, trying to prevent some natives carrying off live stock. Crowds of blacks was all round us, peering and rude, and talking throaty, and after that disturbance we never interfered with them. They could easy have massacred us all.

'Evening came on with storm-clouds driving beneath stars. We built more fires, and gathered round same, and scores of savages flocking to look here and there, sort of gaping and staring and talking gibberish. Most had nothing on but a bit of pelt like, but nearly all the men armed, some with a sort of club — a long handle with a kind of flattened ball carved atop — and some with spears and shields. The shields was made of cowhide or such, stretched on a narrow wood frame tall as a man.

Them savages don't seem unfriendly as long

as they's collecting things washed ashore, and no one interrupting same. We stove in all the casks of lush so's they couldn't get drunk. What the natives wanted, seems, was iron. They'd leave everything for that. I found a fan with ivory sticks, and a spread of parchment with a picture on, and kept it for my little Lucy. It lay on the beach. No one don't claim it. Perhaps whoever it belonged to was drowned.

'Night came down, not dark in spite of hurrying cloud, for all the rents in same full of light and stars, something grand. Fires burning here and there, with flame and smoke bending this way and that in the wind. It was warm, too. No rain. I slept very well and deep, but I had a dream also, and it was about the wonderful strange thing — all crawling jewels and pictures like — I'd seemed to have discovered in some broken hold of the *Blanchefleur*. But the sleep was good and sound all the same. The dream came, true, but not to be fixed and clear. I'd been awake some time before a trouble of mind kept growing and growing upon me. I

thought at first it was the black misery was coming again. But it wasn't that.

'Morning was bright, and though seas running high, the storm something abated. Very few savages left, though they came back later, and everything of value gone. A bit of wreck still fast on some kind of reef, but all the rest, except what was scattered on the beach, vanished. The officers, and some of the hands, and one or two natives making signs and pointing, was collected round Captain Calthrop, like a conference was being held. There was a smell of cooking, and that was breakfast preparing. The land was all flattish here, with a few meagre shrubs, but what looked like hills far off. It became, as day advanced, very hot.

'And in this miserable place we buried my Lucy's mother. The lady, poor invalid, sweet and kind always, she couldn't go through what she must during the storm and wreck, and live. She died in the night. When I approached, full of joy at the idea of seeing my Lucy again, and hoping she might be awake and about, and yet my mind all

unhappy, too, with something I can't comprehend at all, it was to find my little girl kneeling by her dead mother, and the ship's surgeon — Paynter, his name was — standing by, and the passengers at a little distance, all reverent. Presently I saw a young woman — it was Mrs. Irons, wife of one of the military officers — kneel by Lucy, and by and by draw my little girl to her, and then both got up. The child was very calm. She saw me, and came slowly along, her beautiful eyes wide and sorrowful; and when she was near, I knelt down on the sand and took her hands. Hands frail and white and narrow. Very delicate little hands. Very frail like.

' "Mamma is dead, Tommy. Lucy thought she was asleep, but she was dead," my little girl told me very softly. "Mamma used to tell Lucy to be very brave always, and so I'm being very brave now, too, like she wanted. But oh! Tommy, Lucy can't believe it — Lucy can't believe it. It was daddy, Tommy, wanted her, I think. But then, there's me. No, daddy first, and now no mamma for Lucy."

'The pretty dress was all soiled and torn. The head was bare and tumbled. She looked

lost, and she looked the loveliest child ever could be in all the world. When she was talking to me she always called herself Lucy, and that's what I always called her, too. Never Blanchefleur. Always Lucy — always. She liked it. She liked me to call her Lucy.

'I asked her to let me be everything — everything —daddy, and mamma, and her own brother to look after her and cherish her for always. "Why, of course, Tommy," she says very low; "there's nobody —nobody — Lucy wants better than you. Let me give you two kisses like in the ship — and then you give Lucy a kiss." When my little girl said this, her eyes grew dim, and when she gave me the two kisses like as before, she cried, all silent. I kissed tears. Mrs. Irons came up, and put her arms round my little girl, and smiled at me, very mournful.

'We had had a sky pilot among the passengers, but he was drowned. We made a grave for my Lucy's mother, by a shrub had a kind of little blossom on it, and Captain Calthrop he said the prayers. Mrs. Irons had an arm round Lucy on one side, and I held my little lass's hand on the other. The ladies

in dresses sullied and ragged, and the gentlemen, whether officers of the ship or army, or civilians, they all stood by the grave; the children were a little way away, and the servants and ship's hands also. All was quiet except for the prayers. My Lucy was very calm. Before she turned away with us, she said: "Good-bye, mamma. Lucy will come very soon." Sorrow like death came over my heart.'

The sailor ceased. The clock struck. Stanyhurst said: 'Can you tell us the name of this dead lady, Mr. Pidgeon?'

'I can't, sir,' the young steward answered, 'I must have heard it many times, too; but I don't remember, sir. I've been trying to think what it was. I thought they might know at Leadenhall Street. But I'm told there, I must wait until they get a list of passengers was sailing in the *Blanchefleur*. It'll be sent from India, they tells me. I was with the lady for weeks, and with — with my Miss Lucy — but I don't know the name, sir. I can't remember. I've tried, sir, and I can't remember. I think, if I was told the name, I'd be able to say at once that was it.'

The upward look was in Stanyhurst's eyes. After a little while he rose, and poured a glass of champagne. This he brought to the sailor. 'Do me the honour of drinking this, Mr. Pidgeon', he said. The sailor took the wine in silence, and drank, and handed back the glass. Lucy had not moved or spoken. Stanyhurst poured champagne for the Abbé, and claret for himself. Lucy again took the sailor's hand.

'Shall I go on?' the sailor asked; 'it's three o'clock.'

Stanyhurst said: 'Go on, please, Mr. Pidgeon.'

The sailor once more took up the story. 'Hogs had been killed, and turned over a fire, on spits made of iron hoops once bound a barrel. Some sort of bread was kneaded by the two cooks, and wrapped in clay, and baked. There was hot cocoa and tea. 'Twas a very good breakfast — the best, I lay, any one but me was ever to know again. When I weren't serving passengers, I sat with the crew. The carpenter's apprentice — the lad that made the model ship — he wasn't nowhere to be found, and was struck

off the roll. Fifty or sixty — I don't rightly know the number — of those had been in the *Blanchefleur* was perished. The carpenter was there; his name was Paley. My Lucy, she sat with Captain and Mrs. Irons, near the passengers. The little lass ate better than I could have thought, and I was glad. She was braver than any grown-up, I think. Once or twice she smiled at me very sweet and tender.

'Captain Calthrop and his officers, they begins to go about, telling us how we's some three weeks' journey from Dutch settlements at Cape Good Hope, and must be all courageous to undertake the march. This was just as wrong as the statement about where the *Blanchefleur* was before she struck. No, not so wrong in some ways after all. We was that much — three weeks or so — from a settlement, if we'd been able to go straight, I reckon, and not found so many alarming hindrances — country savage and unknown, and sickness, and delicate children and women, and broad rivers must be explored to discover a place could be forded,

and armed natives and wild beasts to carry fear. But it was long before we began to lose the hope had sprung up when we was all marshalled for the journey.

'That shipwrecked party moving off in a straggling column, women and children in the midst, it made a strange sight. I think I can see it now. Handsome swaddy officers, some still in scarlet jackets wrinkled and spoiled with salt water; ladies in dresses was once fine and now all shabby and draggled; infants miserable and frightened; native servants, both women and men; unhappy civilians had been rich, and now none so poor; ship's officers, and lascars, and seamen. All these tramping in the sands and scrub under punishing sunlight; and all presently surrounded by a great swarm of natives jabbering and dangerous. Seems the savages don't want us to depart. Seems they thinks there's something to be stolen, and we's carrying it away. But we was pretty nigh barren of everything but reliance.

'What food we had was carried in hammocks slung on oars, and sometimes some

weary child would be added to the load. The natives now and then got very bold, and would snatch a ribbon or locket or such from a woman, or threaten a gentleman to make him give the buttons off a coat. We didn't know why they all left us at last. Then we found it was because we was coming to another village belonged to their enemies. Before they goes off they pelted us with whatever stones was lying about, and dear Mrs. Irons, she had her cheek torn open. We had to hold Captain Irons to prevent him going bare-handed for the brutes done it. That was the second day after the march began, I think.

'It was late afternoon when we arrives at the other village, sort of beehive huts, and all the land about kept clean and neat, and some kind of cultivation near, with grazing cattle. The natives is uncouth like the former, but different; a little taller, p'raps, and kind of designed with coloured stains on the faces and chests; some tattooed also; and the hair done like you sees clowns in the pantomime. They was armed same's the savages on the beach.

'We couldn't stay there. The native women was as bad as the men for grabbing things; buttons, and perhaps some little trinket a lady might be wearing; and by and by they grows vicious and threatening. There was a sort of battle one time, and two lascars killed with those knobbed sticks I mentioned. It was because the savages tried to molest some of the Indian women of our party. The odds was very heavy against us; and we was glad when a kind of truce was called, and Captain Calthrop and the chief of the village they began to confabulate by gestures. Some of our people was badly cut, and one had a spear wound of which he died; two lascars, as I said, was killed. We give the village chief a gentleman's gold watch, and he kind of promises we may go safe. We got some food, too, here.

'So the march goes on, and every day natives crowding us and tearing things away they wanted, and coming close and stealing; but at nights always drawing off; though, even then, there's no peace. Wild beasts prowling near; and sometimes a kind of

chesty roar, and sometimes a sort of insane cackle, like lions and hyenas about. Once a herd of wild cattle stampeding through. No comfort. And the only food some shellfish obtained by going down to the beaches, or what could be got by bargaining with the savages. Buttons, and pieces of money, and now and then a girl's or woman's jewellery, and shoe-buckles, or watches, or rings, and bits of cloth or silk, and so on. Three Indian women and a white girl, they was kidnapped, I believe, this part. We used to beg of the Kaffirs or Hottentots, or whatever the name may be, in those kraals — that's the word — we came across. Sometimes no good, sometimes a little food; and often the native women, out of a sort of motherly compassion, I suppose, providing cow's or goat's milk for the children. Torments of hunger assailed us all these days.

'Once, at night, two children was carried off by wild beasts — lions, I think — and nothing to be done. They was gone into the wilderness, and lost, before we'd had time to move. Perhaps better so, than endure the sufferings other little ones must. For the

children — the younger ones — began to die. I can't speak about that. And I don't know how many days or weeks we'd been journeying before hardships, and exhaustion, and sickness, became real terrible, and every day someone dead. Rivers, sometimes very wide, to be crossed where a shallow could be found, and the way a labour and weariness all the time. The sun smiting relentless by day, and then the dangers of the night. All stumbling, and straying, and going on like in a nightmare, it seems to me, looking back.

'I cared for my Lucy all the time. I'd make believe to be whistling and gay and strong, and ask to be allowed to carry her, and talk jokes and stories while I done so. She'd grown very thin and light, but her spirit like a fire nothing can't tame. Yes, and her gaiety too, and bits of sailor talk and such, like in the *Blanchefleur*, but — ah, me — just patience and courage same's myself was showing that time. She was lovelier in weakness than ever before. Braver than a lion, too. And there was something in her beautiful eyes — in little Lucy's eyes — like she saw visions.

Sometimes all rapt, and like not knowing where she was, but looking at something wild and lovely. I don't like speaking to my Lucy when she's like that; and then I'd get frightened, and be obliged to say something foolish and lively to call her back. And she'd smile and sigh as if caught away from a happy trance.

'I'd find food for her, by hook or crook, every day. I'd have murdered any one'd tried to stop me. I'd whet my knife on stones, and have it handy at the hip; just in case. I'd go into kraals that no one don't know nothing about, and bargain with a gold or silver piece out of the money belt — it was getting lighter each week — for something good to eat. I'd make like I was rocking a baby in the arms, and wanted milk, and nearly always a native woman would fetch some. I was very glad I'd thought of that bit of acting. I'd made a vow to God Lucy should eat every day. And I'd starve so's she'd get it. Yes, and I'd kill, too.

'Mrs. Irons, she fell very ill, and the lascars and the rest of us, we took turns in carrying her in a hammock slung on an oar, like I said

just now we bore provisions. Captain Irons, he used to walk alongside, holding her hand. And often I'd be bearing Lucy in my arms. I'd given my little one the fan I'd salvaged on the beach, and she used to spread it, and we'd tell stories about the pictures — I'd always make these laughable's I could — was painted on same. And once we had a great surprise, and all joy, in discovering you could open the fan another way and find another picture. The painting weren't too suitable to make up innocent stories about, but I done it, all successful and happy.

'Mrs. Irons dies, and was buried in the wilderness. Now, when I knows what happened, I don't think about the deaths we had as so very sorrowful. Death, among friends, and in safety, if such may be said, it was better than the other fate of so many, maybe. "Mamma will like to meet dear Mrs. Irons, and hear about Lucy and Tommy, walking along in Africa, and telling stories. And Lucy must remember, too, so's she can tell mamma about afterwards," the little girl

said. Sometimes, when I'm where my Lucy can't see, I weeps and weeps.

'Captain Irons, he gave me two silver shoe-buckles belonged to his young wife, p'raps for a remembrance, or p'raps because he wanted I should have something might be exchanged for food for little Lucy. He was a kind man, handsome and tall, and heart-broken when Mrs. Irons died. Sometimes, at night by the fire, or on the march, he'd sing brave and comic.

'He was killed. I knows his regimentals very well, and recognized it was him by same. I must tell about that; it's the worst of this part of all the march. That was when we come to a broad river, and must explore inland, searching for a place to cross. Evening came on, and still no shallows. The whole party then decides to pass the night on the bank, and search again next day. But in the distance, I sees what's like broken water, the river, maybe, going over pebbles that part, and low enough to ford. About a quarter mile away perhaps. I walks on alone, and finds 'tis so. Easy to cross at this point, I

thinks; but perhaps not to-night — perhaps to-morrow morning, when we breaks camp. I turns to go back. And there's Lucy.

'Thin and lovely in her rags, my little girl, and standing stock still in the yellow evening that changes so soon, these parts, into stars, or moon, and full night. The small cracked shoes is bound with threads and linen to keep same from falling apart. A kerchief once belonged to poor Mrs. Irons, is over the hair. The sky very swiftly goes from yellow to pink, and then a sweet kind of purple, and a star or two, white and like throbbing, before I rises from where I kneels before my darling, holding her hands, and no word said.

' "I couldn't bear you should go away, Tommy," the little girl whispers, "and leave Lucy. I don't know when you left, or where you've gone. But something told Lucy, and here she is."

'I never, as I said, cried when I was with my little girl; only afterwards, and alone. We sat down there, and kissed each other, gentle and loving. A hyena goes by, spotted and ugly, not far away, and looking back, like snarling and afraid. And then, not

loud, but somehow dreadful, there's a sort of turmoil, all confused, and a distant screeching laugh. I knows that sound. It's like natives make when they're excited, and happy, and cruel. Savages we used to meet sometimes, in this part, they was finer and more independent like than before. A touch of pride, too, seems. I always feared them. Ostrich feathers was what they used for decoration. Handsome men, lean, and all muscle like gleaming bronze. More silent than the others, and speaking curt, and looking a person in the eyes. Warriors, I lay.

'It was these had come upon the camp, and massacred many, but spared some, too. When I got to where I could look, all the battle — to call it such, for our party was unarmed — was finished. I saw Captain Irons with a big spear stuck through the back. There were some other bodies — a great many. The savages was moving about, like talking to each other and discussing a few prisoners — women and children mostly.

'Lucy was only a little way behind me. I wouldn't go far from her, and yet I wouldn't

let her see neither. The night was now all bright stars, sand, rocks, and shadows, dusky trees and shrubs, beautiful, and wild, and quiet.

'I took my little Lucy's hand and led her away from that place. I said: "My Lucy, my own dear little girl, and sister, and daughter, we must go on now together, just like in the story we was telling. Just you and me. Just us, my Lucy; no one else. The others, they've all gone to a native village, and there, I think, they'll stay, on account of the food and that, after such a long starvation. But here's us two, heroic as you please, a bold sailor lad and a brave little daughter of a pongo officer, see, and we's for going on, eh?"

'The little girl took my hand, but she don't say nothing. I carried my Lucy across the river, and some way the other side, and then we walked a bit. She was very tired. We slept in the shelter of a rock, by some bushes, on the sand. You could hear the sea a long way off. I didn't want to sleep. I wanted to stay awake, and guard my darling. But I slept and slept, and then,

here's morning, and all solitary and strange for two lost travellers.'

Lucy lifted up and kissed the sailor's hand

Thomas Pidgeon, after looking about the room, as if he were both here and far off in Africa, and a little confused, continued: 'We had no food all that morning. I tried some berries I found, but only to get sharp pains, and then violently sick. I carried my little girl part of the way, and holding her hand the rest, to the beach. All rocks and empty sea; a bit of plank washed up; a few palms, and a piece of woodland. On the shore I collected sea shells — things like they might be oysters, and some mussels — and these I ate, raw, one of each, and only gave to Lucy when I'd found they didn't make me sick. A wild beast like a large cat — not a lion or hyena — came out of the woodland, and looked, and yawned, and went trotting away. I thought I saw a thing looked like a monkey in the trees, but perhaps nothing there. We make a little fire on that beach, just for fun, with the burning-glass, like in the story.

'A high cape of rocks this part went deep into the sea, and cut off where we wanted to go, so we must walk inland to continue the journey. Sometimes my brave little Lucy would sing — sweet small songs they was — and then I would do sailors' shanties. The next day we came to a kind of native village by the shore, with canoes on the beach; and I was able to get some fish, and a grass basket, and fruits like tomatoes. I gave two silver pieces for same. I wouldn't let Lucy come with me ever, not when I went to village huts. I feared the savages. A lovely little girl like that.

'And I must often go to kraals, either inland or on the beach, and I would watch from afar to try to see what sort of natives there, and if like those I've described, the tall men, then I'd avoid such, unless they was mostly away hunting, or something, and chiefly women and children left behind.

'I don't know how long this went on — some days; a week perhaps — Lucy and me either walking along the shore, or near. Once we saw a dead whale, enormous and rotting, and the stink fearful, stranded on the

beach. Twice we must go far into wilderness to find a place where we could cross rivers, and once a movement and crackling alongside in the bush, like some wild beast was stalking us. We would hear animals — cries and movements — at night, sometimes roving quite close. My Lucy, if ever she was afraid, she never allowed such to appear. The bravest, the bravest little soul. And clapping the hands when we sees ostrich birds running, I remembers.

'But my darling got weaker and weaker, her face thinner, and the eyes larger and more rapt. She never complains. One night when we was sleeping in open grass-land, almost like a meadow, and the moon full, and shining upon a dark forest far away, my little sweetheart shook me awake. I always felt her hand on me, like a quicksilver of joy, and was all alert at once. She looked like a little seraph, pale, and lovely, and in rags, with the moonlight upon her.

' "Hark, Tommy!" she says.

'There was a trampling, like dull thunder, and the ground shaking, and we stood up,

hand in hand, to see what it might be. And then, here's the great shapes, moving slow and majestic, and coming into open ground, out of the forest. A herd of elephants, plain as day under the big clear moon. I felt a little fear, I think — them long pale tusks so wicked looking — although the herd was, maybe, a half-mile or so away.

'We stayed awake together for a long while after the elephants was gone, my little girl telling me about how she used to ride in a howdah on an elephant in India, with a mahout — I remember — sitting on the monster's head, and instructing him as to direction by jabbing with a goad, same like I see in Trinco. And that night she relates how her daddy went out to a party given by a rajah, and all rode the elephants, and followed a jungly path, and shot two tigers. These days and nights, we told each other stories.

'And so to sleep, side by side. Little Lucy and me, in the wilds of Africa, asleep, side by side. My Lucy and me.

'We was dirty and in tatters these days, no

shoes, and the feet bound with rags, me all sunburnt black like a savage, and Lucy's arms the same, but her face ever somehow pale, and a kind of lovely flush — but not healthy, I knows — in the cheeks. And gradually, gradually, it comes upon my heart, with all the bitterness and anguish in the world, and every wild despair, that my little darling must very soon die. And she knew, too; it was in her look; it was in her smile. She knew.

'"Love Lucy always, Tommy," she says, not unhappy, but kind of gay, and all fondness also; "and Lucy will love Tommy. All this wild strange country, and you, Tommy, and me. Lucy won't never forget, not never. Lucy will tell mamma about brave Tommy."

'This was the day I killed the savage. He comes out of a dip in the ground where there's some bushes, and his eyes drowsy and stupid and the feet a bit uncertain, like he was drugged. Not just sleepy, nor not drunk neither. He has one of them queer clubs I told you about. First he looks, sort of dumbfounded and staring, at Lucy, and then at me. He makes a face, malevolent, and somehow amused, too, with the lips

curled, and teeth appearing. What he thinks is this. Here's a little white girl, he thinks, to be carried off, and here's a famished lad, weak's a worm, can't do nothing to prevent same. He grunts, all satisfaction. Then he ignores me and goes, kind of wavering, towards my darling.

'Strength like a tiger's flashes on me. I whips out the knife and puts it in his neck twice, as far as it'll go. And then one in the back. He turns his head with a jerk, looking at me, kind of wild and surprised, and then falls down dead. There was no other natives anywhere near. Lucy, she had to fight hard with herself to prevent herself shaking. I was happy.

' "Here's your brave Tommy," I shouts out, exulting; "here he is, my Lucy, to fight the world — to fight all the world so his Lucy's safe; so his Lucy, his sister, and his little daughter's safe as safe for ever." And I gives the body a kick. My little darling, her eyes is enormous with fear, and horror, and admiration. She comes a step or two, and I runs to her and holds her. She faints, then, in my arms.'

The sailor began to tremble, and to look strangely here and there. Lucy put her arms around him.

'Go on, my son,' the priest said.

'Oh, Father!'

'Go on, my son.'

The young sailor resumed: 'I carried my unconscious little girl some distance — I can't tell about time from now on; whether minutes, or hours, or days — and comes to a woody dell with bare ground alongside; and on this bareness some earth-pillars I knows well, the hives raised by the big red ants. Conical sort of heaps, very tall, they builds. They was shedding their wings all about. But I ain't got eyes for nothing except a dreadful thing. One hive was overturned, and a native, stretched flat on the back, crucified above same, the eyelids cut off, and ants swarming the face and body. He was dead, thank God, lying in the powerful sun. Then I was glad Lucy was in a faint. Some deer, very graceful, with long horns slanted back, went gay and leaping, the other side of a stretch of grass land was burnt like straw in the sun.

'In the dell, flowing round a big grey rock, was a stream, and I bathed my Lucy's thin little face; and by and by she sighs, and comes alive once more. It was a pretty place; talking water, dragon-flies darting, and fine, coloured butterflies like dancing mazes over a pool among stones. We rested there an hour or two, and Lucy she got a little strength in sleep. But it don't last. She was dying. And I think, I think, I think she was glad. She knew I would be safe, my little girl. She knew it. And when she mourned a little it was because I couldn't help but mourn.'

The sailor looked at the priest, and the priest said: 'Go on, my son.'

'Oh, Father!'

'Go on, my son,' the Abbé repeated.

'The fear returned,' the young steward said in a lower voice. 'I began to go swoony and faint and strange, and couldn't carry my darling more than a little way at a time. At times, I thinks, I sees my Lucy's mamma, just as my Lucy seems to see her. My Lucy begins to talk, sweet and light-headed, to her mamma, and sometimes a little laugh all happy. My Lucy's mamma was there, I think.

'My mind's all blank a long time. And then the fear. And in that terror of my soul, once, all magnificent, and full intimidating, a canopy of jewels and pictures stretching over Lucy and me. I don't know where I'm going that time; daylight, and hot sun, and night, and stars. I must have got food somewhere — but perhaps not. One day, that seemed years ago, I'd vowed I'd do murder so's Lucy could be fed. But I was too weak now to kill anybody. Very weak we was, Lucy and me. Seems like I was straying in this world, and another, too. There comes an idea we was both singing and laughing for a bit. Lucy's lovely child's laughter. But it's all. . . .' The sailor made an empty gesture, and the eyes were vacant.

The clock struck. The rain fell.

'There's times seems to stand out, like visions,' the sailor resumed. 'There's Lucy and me by a kind of creek, and funny little fishes you can't help smiling at, little fishes with bulging eyes, coming out of the water, moving by means of the fins, over the strand, living in the air, and sort of basking on the

shore, in the sunshine. I collects some, and makes a fire and cooks same. Very poor to eat, not worth it hardly. And there's the time a seabird drops a big fish, still alive, but damaged, close to where we's seated on the beach, and me retrieving same, and telling Lucy 'twas like the person in Genesis got a raven to feed him. Then wrapping the fish in clay, and baking over a fire was lighted by the burning-glass. It all comes back in flashes, so to speak. Those was fairly lucky times. So was the times I could find a village, and bargain for food, offering a coin, maybe, and getting cow-meat, and a sort of corn. But the money got very low, and then, one day it's all gone. Only I still retains the burning-glass, and little fan, and shoe-buckles. I don't want to part with those. Not till the last extremity, you might say.

'We kept mostly where always we could hear the sea. It was only so we could tell we was going south, towards the Dutch settlements. Sometimes a river to be crossed, and a long way to travel before we can find where to do so. My Lucy, my little girl, she's so

feeble at last she must be carried, or supported along on her weary small feet, all the time. The smile, sort of sweet and wild, and the rapture, lovely and terrible to see, they're more often now in my darling's face. And when she comes back to reality, as it were, it's always with a sigh, and like she's astonished. And something else, too, what I can't never understand, not then, nor now, nor ever. Same's if my little Lucy's not suffering at all, but content, and happy. Then she sees me, looking at her, and wondering, and at once, "Brave, Tommy," Lucy says; "Brave Tommy," she says, all kind and loving; "little Lucy's brave Tommy."

'I can't never believe we was once all secure in a ship; or that there's a place called London, and Windle's Tavern, and all. I can't never believe there's streets and shops and food; cities, and coaches, and people walking about and cracking jokes. That wilderness was more real than anything ever was. And yet more unreal, too. It'll be with me, whether or not, until I dies. All

wilderness; and me and Lucy. Little Lucy and me, in the wilderness of Africa, side by side. My Lucy and me. Lost.

'I speaks to my little girl, gay and adoring: "Here's a long trail we's going, my ever darling wee Lucy, but bound to end somewheres, eh? Just keep on, eh? Bound to end somewheres. And then all callao, eh?"

' "Oh, yes, Tommy, brave Tommy, Lucy's brave sailor, all callao — all happy. Lucy won't never forget — never forget Tommy, not never." She puts an emphasis on that "never" as used to knock on my heart. Like she was certain. Sometimes she smiles satisfied, and sometimes a little grieving, when she says such, my little Lucy. Too often now she takes a long tired breath, like a little sob, and sleeps, or perhaps faints — I don't know which — in my arms. There's longer halts these times, so's to find a sort of strength to go on later.

'Then comes a day when we couldn't get nothing but mussels — no villages where to beg or steal a strip of beef drying in the sun, neither — and the morning after that, my

Lucy's in such a long swoon I fears she can't never come out of same. But I don't mind, you understand, so much — not so much — now. I thinks of death very kindly, yes, and shall from henceforth ever do so. All that cruel marching and wretchedness — for me, I mean — to end in rest; to end in Lucy's rest; to end, for my darling, in peace. Like fainting. Like going to sleep — like going easy to sleep. Nothing more. Just peace. I don't mean my Lucy wasn't at peace, for she was. But a peace not to be comprehended. A dreaming peace, in a life was here and also far away, you might think. A starving little girl, thin as a bone. But somehow not suffering, I believes then and believes still; somehow not suffering, all thanks to God. I never minded when big vultures, shabby and evil, began to alight here and there, very close, like waiting till we succumbs. And at night jackals. It never mattered, seems. My Lucy and me we should both be dead before they came nearer.'

The young steward ceased, and looked, with a kind of questioning in the eyes, at the priest. Lucy made a small movement, com-

passionate and woeful. Stanyhurst watched a candle burning out, with little jumps of flame, in its socket. The priest gazed steadily, with a smile kind and quiet, at the sailor. No one spoke until Thomas Pidgeon again went on with the story. And now, and through the remainder of the sailor's words, a low rumble, far or near, seemed, gradually, to fill the chamber from without, to arise and enter and resound about the walls, and echo in air; a noise distinct from, and blending with, the constant dropping of rain. Early industry was awake, and all the wheels of London beginning to revolve once more.

'Everything ended,' the young steward said; 'it all ended like now I must tell. I don't mean it ended for my little girl so much, but for me. It ended for her — or it began, it began for Lucy — that day I'd been carrying my child I don't know how long or how far, and she asleep, Lucy, or fainted. Then all at once here's open ground and a kraal; smoke going up, and cows and goats here and there.

'I laid my unconscious little girl in a cup

of grass-land, hidden from the village, and goes alone to the nearest hut. There's native women and children farther off, but this hut like set apart, and a great boulder of rock nearby, such as to conceal my arrival from those moving in the kraal.

'So I went, weak and slow, to the hut. At first no one to be seen. But presently, just in the entrance, here's a handsome young native woman — a girl, I reckons, the breasts still firm and round — grinding corn, or maize, or some such, with a pestle, where she's crouched over a sort of wooden mortar. She lifts up a pair of splendid yellow eyes, not the least astonished, and watches me draw near. As I approaches, I pulls open the shirt to let her see my skeleton body, and the ribs sticking out, and jerks me head, like saying "over there", and performs the trick of nursing a baby. The young woman looks me in the eyes, nothing but unconcerned and aloof, and makes a kind of movement of indifference, as much as to remark, "What's that got to do with me?"

'I shows her the fan, and shoe-buckles, and burning-glass, and begins to entreat and

point. Her eyes, they opens a little larger when she sees what I'm offering, and then goes disinterested once more. I starts to supplicate and gesture, and feeble tears running down too. The young woman gives me an angry look, and holds up a hand for silence. And, so, after watching me for a little while longer, she stretches herself on the back, and spreads the hands and feet, staring upwards. This was the very attitude in which I'd found the dead man pegged down on the ant-heap, and I'm aware, before she sits up and gives me a nod to assure me that's my fate, she was indicating I'd be so treated, and my eyelids cut off likewise.

'I makes a signal like betokening I knows, but I must have milk or such for a child's dying of starvation. After a little silence, she gives a curt movement of the head towards a wooden bowl of milk, meaning, "Take it and be off". I'm going to leave a shoe-buckle for payment, but the young woman sort of snarls, furious and offended. Then I bows to say "Thank you," takes up the bowl, all gratitude, and goes out of the hut.

'The relief's so great I can't properly walk

for some time. I grows giddy too, and the scene about me goes blind for a little. But I don't touch the milk — that's for Lucy, and somehow holy. It was light to carry, the bowl, and yet I can't hardly bear it along, somehow; and looking into it, I seems to see smoky pictures and colours beginning to form in the liquid. I must look away, all fear, drawing towards where I left my little girl. And while I'm doing so, strong, and strange, and dreadful, a sense, a certainty comes to me that there's others beside Lucy in the hollow. My knees shook. And a phantom canopy, all magnificent, and full intimidating, it was spread slowly between myself and the sun. I went in panic. And a kind of horror I can't explain kept increasing and increasing. At last — at last — me, the coward, me the coward, I creeps to where I can look without being seen.

'Lucy is standing up, frail as a wraith, looking at nothing except something far away, and smiling in that contemplation. A few paces away from the little girl, six or seven savages, all silent, resting on the spears, is watching her, their backs towards me. I

ain't going to pretend I was too weak to go farther. To tell such a lie as that would be another cowardice more sinful than the one before. I could have gone on — I could. But all that's come into my mind, it's the idea of being crucified alive on the earth, and no eyelids, and ants swarming. I went on hands and knees to hide myself still more. And doing thus, I falls into such a fit of shaking that the bowl of milk is overturned. I watched it wasting and soaking into the ground, while something begins gently to mount inside my chest, and comes into the mouth, with a taste like bitter almonds. Blood runs over the lip, streaming down, and mixes with the useless milk, red and white commingled in the earth. And so I remains.

'So I remains, until I'm sure the savages is no longer in the dip of grass, and then I goes to where Lucy's lying dead. She hadn't been touched — not touched. Unless by the finger of God. I never cried nor took on. I carried the little body to a shrub had a small blossom on it, like the bush where we buried my child's mother; and beside this,

with my hands and the knife, I dug a grave and laid her. After some time I prayed.

'I said: "Oh, sweet Christ, take this little one to yourself — take this little girl, oh, Christ — and comfort her, and comfort her — and forgive me." Then I went away.

'Evening beautiful and still was coming on — peace, you might think, drawing upon the world. And suddenly it's night, with starlight beaming like day. There's never no stars like those I seen in Africa. Bright lamps crowding the sky, you could believe, a fountain of clear radiance. I passed right through the kraal. Those standing here and there, near me as I went by, men, and women, and children, not a soul moved, but they all looked in silence, like I was a ghost or such. They'll never do nothing but respect the demented, natives won't.

'How long after I don't know, I came to a grassy plain, forest and craggy hills in the distance; and still I walked on, light of foot, as if I could have continued so for ever. No fatigue. And then I fell down and slept. I slept

like I was dead, and yet not for very long neither.

'There was some sundried strips of beef, a cake of some sort of flour, baked hard, and a wooden bowl full of milk by me when I woke. It was just casual to me if I ate or drank or not. I never asked myself how the food got there. I didn't care. I wept a little, not much; and then I broke some dry sticks from a withered shrub, made a fire to cook by, and prepared a kind of breakfast. The early morning air, it was keen and sweet, heartening — if I could have been heartened — like taking wine. A cactus, or prickly pear, or whatever it is, was growing near me, with a lizard basking in the sun, and a painted butterfly or two. Vultures was overhead. I was very unhappy, and yet the mind somehow at rest too.

'There, in the stillness, under that great blue cup of heaven, I sat and thought. Things melancholy and tender, they came to me; old days in London — ships sailing — the *Comorin* crossing the ocean — and me serving behind a foreign bar. After that, the

things that had touched me, they grows very vivid and also dreamlike too. The *Blanchefleur*, she was like something told in a tale. The wreck, and cruel marching by day and night, and guttural voices of natives mingling with remembered words of friends, men and women and little children speaking like once I had heard. Sometimes a great wind, and seas, and a broken ship, and nightmare glory found a gloomy place. My Lucy, she seemed very close to me, mostly with happy talk, and smiles, and laughter, and at times with the look, strange and lovely, of a little girl lost in watching things far away.

'I felt I was safe. I knew all my journeying in Africa was drawing to an end. No elation there all the same. But for one aching sorrow, but for one child, one little girl, to be by my side, I could have cried out in joy. She wasn't there. Never to be carried any more. I think I felt her near; and yet, and yet she wasn't there; never to be carried in my arms any more. By and by I puts out the fire. After that, I collected what remained of the food, and went on in a sunlight gaining power as it mounted and blazed.

The sun of Africa, and the stars, and the moon in splendour, my Lucy's beneath them; and me, I'm far away.

'Two days later, in the afternoon, I meets a white man, Dutch, in a wideawake hat and broadcloth, riding a horse, with a long gun laid across the saddle. "You've come too late, my friend and enemy" — we was fighting the Dutch at the time — "too late to be of any value," I tells myself, walking without haste towards him.'

The sailor fell silent, looking upon vacancy for a few minutes, and then about the room and in the faces of those who had been listening to his story. 'That's all,' he said. After a little while he turned to Lucy. 'She was like you,' he resumed, looking gravely into the girl's face; 'I knew it soon's I come into the room. But she was younger.'

'Let me take her place, Tommy,' the girl said very quietly.

The sailor was silent, looking upon vacancy. And then he turned to gaze, with a sort of fear, and the lips parted as if to ask a question, in the girl's eyes. But nothing was said.

There was no sound of rain. The rain had

ceased. And now a rumour like the sea, low and louder and low again, sometimes the near sound of heavy slow creaking wheels, a shout and the cracking of a whip, sometimes the sharp noise of hoofs trotting and the smart rattle of fast vehicles, proclaimed the awakened city. Nearly all the candles were expiring, some already burnt out, others sending up a last reek of smoke. The window-blinds were lighted by the dawn. Four people, one of whom, Stanyhurst, looked troubled and haggard, came, out of abstraction and a distant dream, to the realization of London and a room. The door was abruptly opened by a tousled, half-dressed house-boy, who stood gaping in amazement, staring at his master — at his young mistress seated side by side with a thin and shabby youngster — and at a priest.



THE AUTHOR

Hugh Edwards was born in Gibraltar in 1878 of a naval family: he died in 1952. Educated privately and later at Sandhurst, he joined the West India Regiment and was invalided out after twelve years service, most of which was spent in the West Indies and West Africa.

He retired to a cottage in East Prawle, Devonshire, where most of his books were written. He had formerly contributed drawings and articles to his regimental magazine, for which he designed the cover. His favourite occupation, other than writing, was painting, and he enjoyed polo, bridge and chess.

All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's was inspired by a re-reading of *The Wreck of the Grosvenor*, a book recommended by James Agate as one of the 100 best books with which to start a library. Among Edwards' other novels were *Sangoree* and *Crack of Doom.*

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